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ARNOLD DAMEN, S.J.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE EARLY FRIENDS OF CHRIST
OUT TO WIN
TALKS TO PARENTS
TALKS TO BOYS

ARNOLD DAMEN, S. J.

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A CHAPTER IN THE MAKING OF CHICAGO

BY

REV. JOSEPH P. CONROY, S.J.

Author of "The Early Friends of Christ," etc.

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TO THE MEMORY
OF THE EARLY MEMBERS
OF THE PARISH OF THE HOLY FAMILY
HELPERS OF DAMEN
WHOSE DEEDS LIVE AFTER THEM
IN THE FAITH THEY SPREAD
IN THE COUNTRY THEY SERVED

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ARNOLD DAMEN, S.J.

CHAPTER I

A SERMON AND A STORM

ONE dark April night, just fifty years ago, a group of persons were hurrying through a street of Chicago's south side. In the midst of this group was a little boy of nine years, who was put to it to keep the pace of his elders, whom he was accompanying. And the going was not without its hazards, for it must be remembered that the sidewalks of Chicago in those days were, like delicate lace work, largely composed of interstices. To hurry along its streets at night called for a degree of daring and indicated that some happening of importance was under way.

All nights in Chicago were, of course, dark, the feeble gas lamps at intervals merely marking a spot where one might ultimately arrive if one were careful. But this night, the boy remembers, was black. Underfoot, mud on the sidewalks, mud in the street; overhead, almost scraping the roofs of the houses, wallowed folds of heavy clouds with terrifying growlings coming from their caverns. Every few seconds hideous forked lightnings streaked out as though darting and searching about for somebody to shrivel to a cinder. One of the scenes they lit up, the boy recalls, was the city morgue at Eighteenth Street, a spot wild horses could not have dragged him by any night he was alone. Ghosts were popularly believed to walk there, and pop-eyed boys told hair-raising tales of having seen and been chased by them.

But the white lightning glare revealed other things, too. Other dark groups, who could not be ghosts, were momentarily visible in the flashes, pushing ahead against the swooping gusts of wind, picking their way in single file across the ankle-deep mud at the crossings, all the groups converging toward a dense crowd that was steadily disappearing into the doors of a church at Eighteenth and Butterfield Streets—St. John's Church, then in the suburbs of Chicago.

A mission was in progress there and the great Father 'Diamond' was to preach.

In due time the group to which the little boy belonged got into the church and found place in the few empty seats left at the rear. The crowds came packing in after them until the aisles, the sanctuary, every spot of standing room in the church was taken. The tiny vestibule gave evidence, from the pushing of bodies and the sliding of feet, that the only place left for many who came would be the street. Any fire commissioner today would be terrified at the crowd jammed into every inch of that wooden church. A few jets of gaslight from brackets on the walls did little more than make the darkness visible, producing the impression of some mysterious, subterranean gathering in the catacombs.

After what must have been a sharp struggle to pierce the crowd, the preacher of the evening rose into the pulpit and stood, looking at the congregation. Then, amid a perfect silence, Father Damen made the sign of the cross, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' And just as he had finished the words, the storm broke. 'Broke' isn't the word. It exploded. The very first crash of thunder that shot out of the sky made the whole building shudder from stem to stern, like a ship hit by a tremendous sea. The gaslights along the wall were all but extinguished and the church went into total dark-

ness. A moment, and a flash of lightning, crackling viciously, swept through the windows and lit the interior brighter than day. Then a second thunder crack, worse than the first and apparently right over the roof, and the congregation began to show signs of fear. They held, however, and the threatened stampede did not start. Because Father Damen opened his sermon and went on with it as though thunder and lightning did not exist. The boy who listened that night will never forget that sermon and that storm. And yet, except the words of the sign of the cross, he does not remember a single word of the sermon. The whole affair resolved itself, in his young mind, into a contest between Father Damen and the thunder; and with the sporting instinct of youth, he was wondering, and perhaps betting, who would win. The storm did not let up. One would imagine that with its first dozen terrific bolts it would have exhausted itself, or that the sword of the blinding lightning would weary. No; the battle went on and on, with Father Damen in the pulpit there battling against them. When the lightning flashed around him in the pulpit, he was like the Bible pictures of Moses on Mount Sinai, receiving the tables of the Law, his white hair, his giant figure, his voice on the mountain top, mediating between God and the people. In after years, when the boy read about the historic storm scene at St. Peter's in Rome when the Cardinals of the Vatican Council were voting one by one for the Infallibility of the Pope and the *Placets* of their Eminences were each answered by a terrific crash of thunder above the dome—he recalled that night in St. John's Church, with Father Damen preaching, when he had heard its duplicate. And, like Moses and like the Cardinals, Father Damen won the contest. His voice poured through that raging of the elements, steady, melodious and triumphant. If any human voice was ever put to the test, surely his was

that night. And it was not merely that he sounded above the thunder. His words came forth articulate and clear. He preached a sermon through all that crack and roar of heavy artillery and that incessant, dazzling, disturbing glitter of dangerous lightning, and he seemed to do it easily. He did not shriek, shout or bellow. He kept his voice on the key all the way, with indefinite resources of power held in reserve for every emergency. When he needed more power, all he had to do was, as the chauffeur has it, to 'step on it' and the power was there.

The astute reader has, no doubt, already penetrated the mystery of the passive small boy in this scene and has identified him with the writer. Well, that was the first time I heard Father Damen preach—likewise the last. As I have admitted that I do not recall a single word of the one sermon I attended, it may be inferred that I never heard him at all. But this I cannot admit. Just as there are songs, so there are sermons without words. Many of us, perhaps, after years of experience, wish there were more of both. Not suggesting the least criticism, however, of Father Damen's words, I am sure I took vital strength from his sermon, sure that I sensed what he meant to tell me. Indeed, of all the sermons I have since listened to, and they have not been few, the sermon of Father Damen in St. John's Church that wild night is the one I remember best and, as far as I can judge, took most away from. The occasion was admittedly spectacular, the sulphurous fires and the all-shaking thunder without, suggesting evil spirits in Miltonic battle, and the clear, musical, unbroken voice of Father Damen ringing through the confusion with unwavering defiance, like the archangel's trumpet challenging the demons to the fight.

But there was something deeper than mere pageantry. The man revealed himself beyond possibility of misconception. Faith was there, the rooted belief

that was part of him. One sensed it easily; determined courage, a disregard of difficulties, a fearlessness of danger; personal affection for the souls of his people; a stanch, direct sincerity that brought him into touch with every person in the church and a tenacity that would not let go until he had brought them all over to his side. The man was there and the subject and the occasion. And it is the man I remember.

If a boy of nine can be so moved by a sermon and can recall it so vividly after fifty years, it can only mean that Father Damen possessed the gift of eloquence and that the affection and the admiration lavished on him by his generation was neither misplaced nor exaggerated.

CHAPTER II

THE HOMELAND OF DAMEN

THERE is a hardy perennial saying, handed down to us very likely from the Garden of Eden, to the effect that appearances are deceitful. Such an evident truism in theory is this, that it pains us to hear it. In practice, however, we ignore it so steadily that it is doubtful that a day passes but every one of us trips and falls heavily over it. I bring it in here, not for the purpose of pointing a moral, but because I am going to talk about Holland and I begin by raising a warning finger.

The man in the street, if you should mention Holland to him, would know all about it. 'Yes,' he would unravel, 'a little place over in Europe about as big as a golf course; full of water hazards; people wear baggy trousers, flamboyant petticoats, wooden shoes, steeple hats. You see them in those pictures of Rip Van Winkle we studied in school. They used to be around New York in the old days, a lot of them. Dutchmen, they called them. A stolid sort; no action; can sit in one spot all day with a stein on the table, and smoking a meerschaum pipe; got a big reputation for cheese.'

This is funny, but the man in the street doesn't think it is. He passes this out as a bit of accurate statistics. It is the sediment of history and no more belongs to history than mud belongs to the water it settles in. The truth is that Holland is the 'fightingest' country in Europe. In fact, considering her area, not much more than a hundred miles square, we think

it safe to claim that more fighting has been done on that tiny space than in any equal territory of the world's history. Up to 1579, while Holland was part of the Netherlands, her story is one of battle after battle. Since then and until the end of the French Revolution in 1815, Holland has fought with Spain, with France, England, Germany, Austria, Sweden and Belgium. For many years her navy was the strongest in the world, and held its own against the combined fleets of France and England. Her merchant ships touched at every coast, and we remember that it was Dutchmen who first sailed up the Hudson River. Among other feats of her busy martial life, she drove Spain out of her boundaries several times, drove out Louis XIV and, twice, Napoleon. She has been called the 'battlefield of Europe.'

All this fighting does not mean that the Dutch are a particularly quarrelsome people. It is the result, partly of her geographical position and partly of her national occupation. Geographically, Holland was the pivotal point for all the whirl of clashing nations in the west of Europe, and the winds of war kept constantly buffeting her from one alliance to another in a continually shifting political scene. Nationally she is a commercial and a seafaring country and she had to have sea room for her markets. In a world where everyone is grabbing for markets, this meant only one thing for Holland—she had to fight.

In her civil and religious life, too, she has been torn by internal discords, most of which can be traced back to the troubles arising from the Reformation. Holland had always been a sturdy Catholic country, and if her priests had been true to her, there is every probability that, with her natural tenacity of character, she would be entirely so today. But as the Zuyder Zee broke through her dikes to get into the land, so did the Calvinists break through her outer defenses,

the clergy, to eat into her religious life. A persecution of the Catholics followed, which for bitter cruelty is comparable only to the persecution of Henry VIII and Elizabeth in England. All this reacted upon her civil life. Politics and theology became inextricably entangled, and, when the Calvinists later split among themselves, further divisions arose that have lasted to the present time.

But even if all these things had not happened to Holland, she would have had another big fight on her hands. All through her history she has had to fight the sea. Hamlet's line about 'taking arms against a sea of troubles' cannot be criticized as a mixed metaphor in Holland. It is literally true of her. For seven hundred years, while pushing back the armies of Europe with one hand, she has had to keep pushing back the sea with the other. Between diking, impoldering, draining, canalling, she has had enough to do simply to keep the ground under her feet. She is forever at the pumps. For Holland is largely below the sea level, and the sea is after her. Already out of an area only one fourth the size of Illinois, the North Sea has taken two huge mouthfuls, the Zuyder Zee and the Wadden, one-seventh of her territory. Disastrous inundations have from time to time swept over the land. One of them, in 1421, destroyed seventy-two towns and more than a hundred thousand lives. She is the most sea-bitten country in the world, living under the sleepless menace of treacherous waters. Her energy is evident in this also, that, after studying the tactics of the sea, she has counter-attacked so as not only to hold her own but actually to gain upon her foe.

Nor shall we fully appreciate the ability, vigor and tenacity of the Dutch without remembering her colonies. On a large map of Europe, Holland is merely a thumbnail's size. But off along the Equator between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, for three hundred years

and more, she has owned, developed and governed a territory fifty-seven times as large as herself, with a population today of nearly fifty million people, as many as the United States had in 1880. This population includes natives of every variety found in the Far East, and she governs them all with only thirty-six thousand soldiers, of whom but six thousand are Europeans. Of all colonies, those of the Dutch are most prosperous, well cared for and contented. This ordered and steady control of a distant colony, with an area one fifth as large as the United States, including Alaska, and scattered across a multitude of islands, is effected largely by the civil service established in the Dutch East Indies, the most remarkable in the world.

All things considered, then, it is the nadir of misinformation to say that there has been 'no action' in Holland. To meet the situations forced upon her, she couldn't be idle even if she wished it. As to the reputed stolidity of the Dutch temperament, it is perhaps a providential balance that the Dutchman has about him a touch of phlegm. Otherwise, between the war devil whooping on his boundaries and the deep sea battering at his coast, he would long since have been driven, not only out of his country, but out of his mind as well. Considering what he has been through, nobody should envy the Dutchman his long pipe and a long smoke out of it. The pipe is dry and the smoke is quiet, and dryness and quiet are things he has learned to appreciate.

If from this snapshot of Holland's history we should attempt to deduce the salient features of her national character, the result could be stated, reasonably, I think, in the following terms: The Dutchman is a determined, tenacious person, or he would have been long ago washed out of his country, or bayoneted out of it; he is practical rather than visionary, expecting tangible results from his investment of time and

labor. This we could forecast from the long training he has had in bailing out his fatherland. He is a courageous lover of justice, freedom and his personal rights, as the frequent wars he has engaged in amply prove. He can be downright and intolerant, as his religious history testifies. Vigilance and patience he must have learned along the dikes; economy, from the necessity of snatching his land in handfuls from the sea. Material realities he can grasp firmly, as a man in the sea will take a death grip on a floating spar. His first look will be for what is useful. 'Safety first' is his slogan. He is cool, calculating, deliberate, because he has always had to be wary about keeping his feet on dry land and his head away from flying cannon balls. Visualizing the Dutchman in a composite portrait, we should picture to ourselves a figure standing, both feet sturdily planted, and looking about him with a long, slow, wondering look, as much as to say, 'Well, *that's* all over. What next?' And beneath the picture we should see written the national motto of Holland—*Luctor et Emergo.*

We must not conclude from all this that, in her pursuit of the useful, Holland has forgotten or neglected the beautiful. The Dutchman has his visions, too. He has, if not an effusive, at any rate a steady and genuine enthusiasm for the arts. He is well educated, he likes music, he is world-famous as a painter, and if he had not had to put in so much time at building dikes, he would doubtless have done noble work in architecture.

Finally, religion is one of the great occupations of the Dutchman's soul. 'It has always been the wonder of travelers in Holland,' says a recent writer, 'that so many religious sects should exist in so small a country.' These disruptions occur, of course, only among Protestant bodies. They prove Holland's downright discontent with her experiment in Calvinism. When

the usually shrewd and foresighted Dutchman traded off his Roman Catholicism for Calvinism, that was surely one time he had an eye shut and a foot off the ground. He got the worst of that bargain. It seems a pity, after barring out the sea and driving off all invaders on his material side, that on his spiritual side he should have opened the sluices to the dreary and corrosive flood of Calvinism—of all religions—and allowed himself to bog down in that hopelessly gloomy morass. He is, however, trying to flounder out of it. Catholicism, which was once his strength and comfort, may save him yet. For it begins to appear that he is trading back, slowly but surely. Holland is now nearly forty per cent Catholic. Let us hope that after Calvinism has split itself into a million splinters, he will gather them all up, throw them over the dikes somewhere and walk back to the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER III

THE PATH TO A VOCATION

IN THIS little country of storm and stress Arnold Damen was born. As we follow and observe him throughout his career, we shall find ourselves in touch with the typical, ideal Hollander. His birthplace was in North Brabant, in the little town of Leur, not far from the Belgian frontier. Arnold was the seventh of nine children born to John Damen and his wife Johannah, whose family name was also Damen. John Damen was a prosperous builder of Leur and he lived there until his death in 1848, preceding his wife by but a few months.

The baptismal register of the church at Leur tells us that young Arnold was baptized on the day he was born, March 15, 1815. One of his sponsors was the Very Reverend Arnold Van Arendonk, after whom very likely he was named. From these two facts we may infer that the Damen family were devout followers of their faith and in close touch with their priests. It was not easy to be a Catholic in Holland in those days. Out of the two million inhabitants then in Holland but four hundred thousand were Catholics, all that were left after two centuries of official persecution. This remnant had come through the fire and they must have been stanch to endure it. They were the foundation of the strong Church of two million Catholics in Holland today. And the Damens were among them.

Arnold Damen was born just at the turning point where we may say the modern Holland began. Five

days before his birth, the prince of Orange was crowned as William I, king of the Netherlands. By the treaty of London in 1814, Belgium and Holland had been united into one kingdom, to be known as the Netherlands. During the first fifteen years of his life, therefore, Damen was technically a Netherlander. For many vital reasons this union of the two countries was impossible, and in 1830 the Belgians revolted and set up an independent state, a movement that resulted well for both kingdoms.

The French Revolution had spent itself by the year of Damen's birth, but the waters of confusion still rose all over Europe. Napoleon's stupid idea that he could Napoleonize the world had torn into the very roots of the nations who were fighting for their lives. For almost a generation, beginning with the Terror, war had been the daily bread of Europe. In 1815, the final crash was preparing in Napoleon's last campaign out of Elba, and three months after, Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo. Thus, after centuries of bitter struggles, war within and without, a breathing space of quiet was given to Holland. Damen's early boyhood in Brabant was passed during that period of comparative peace.

The country he lived in is one that breathes of peace. Brabant is not as picturesque as the Dutch lowlands, has no striking characteristics that cause the traveler to pause for something that he has not seen before. It is a familiar scene throughout, but a refreshing one, with its woods, its broken undergrowth, its little villages dropped here and there informally, and every turn offering to the eye some pleasing vista, some undisturbed, drowsy nook, which a painter might eagerly seize upon as his ideal of dreamy contentment—a 'homey' country all through, such as the stifled city-dweller imagines to himself when he would escape from his canyoned streets into a holiday land where he can

take simple, cheerful thoughts out into the clear sun and send them irresponsibly chasing after the birds and butterflies. No healthier spot could be chosen for a young boy to grow up in, body and soul. Damen's sturdy physique and his simple, evenly balanced character owed much to the advantages of these early surroundings.

Sleepily serene as the place seems, romance walks at hand, none the less. Damen's town of Leur is but five miles from the famous city of Breda, that dates back to the eleventh century. From 1534 to the beginning of the nineteenth century Breda might be offered as a sample of the political and the war atmosphere of Holland. The dramatic series of the captures and recaptures of Breda makes an unusual chapter in history. The Spaniards took it in 1581. Nine years after, Maurice of Nassau retook it by a daring strategy, wherein sixty-eight men, hidden under turf in a peat-boat, got into the town and drove the Spaniards out. The spot where the peat-boat lay is pointed out to this day as the Spaniards' Hole. In 1625, after a ten months' siege, the Spaniards recaptured Breda and they felt so good after it that Velasquez celebrated the event in one of his greatest paintings, *Las Lanzas,* known also as the 'Surrender of Breda.' During the French wars the town was taken and retaken twice between 1793 and 1813. Charles II, king of England, lived at Breda during his exile, and William of Orange, another of England's kings, built a fine castle here.

Rambling across this lotus land today, one would not easily suppose that here romance had for centuries gone galloping up and down the lists in a constant succession of tourneys. It seems just as unlikely a combination as that of the Dutchman sitting trancelike by his fire, slowly smoking his long pipe, and the same Dutchman out at sea with his fleet, chasing all the other fleets into harbor. This union of placidity and energy

was what made the Hollander a hard fighter at home and a successful colonist abroad. If we add the supernatural to a character of this kind, we can expect parallel results in its devotion to God's cause, a soul that will master itself thoroughly and, after that, carry the word of God abroad and plant it in other lands.

Through his boyhood, Damen insensibly absorbed both the peace and the romance of Brabant, as his after life fully reveals. His parents saw to it that the grace of God, also, would surround and penetrate him. In spite of the wreckage of all education left in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, the parish school at Leur still managed to function, and here young Arnold spent his earliest school years. During this time he must have shown signs of a vocation to the priesthood. We are told that from his early boyhood he manifested an unusual devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and made many pilgrimages to her famous shrine at Bois-le-Duc. His parents observed the steady development of his character and, after his schooling at Leur, instead of his going to work as most of the boys of that day had to do, they sent him to Belgium, to the classical college at Turnhout. This was a college founded and conducted by M. Pierre Jean de Nef, who turned an ample fortune and distinguished attainments to the training of young men for the priesthood, with the special purpose of sending them to the foreign missions. De Nef directed, supported and taught in the school and his noble work was blest. Hundreds of priests went to the missions from the college of Turnhout. It was always M. de Nef's idea to secure a teaching Order to staff his college, but the disorganized condition of things prevented this until a few years before his death, when he placed the school under the direction of the Jesuits. In Arnold Damen's time the school numbered about one hundred, all day-scholars. After that the Jesuits made it a boarding school and

attached to it an apostolic college, the number of students increasing to more than three hundred. Damen studied well while here, as his standing shows. In 1836 as a sophomore he was sixth in a class of twenty, and the following year as a junior he was seventh among nineteen.

By this time he had arrived at manhood and was considering what special work of the priesthood he would enter and what part of the world he would select as his destined field. His final decision came as a result of a visit paid to the school by the American Indian missionary, the Jesuit Father De Smet, who had been in Europe since 1833. No one better than De Smet could tell of the needs of America and of its great field for the spread of the faith. In a series of talks he told the boys about the country across the sea—immigrants swarming in at its eastern coast, a continual pouring of the population toward the West, and, out beyond the borders of civilization, the Indians roaming the far prairies where no white man's foot had as yet trod. All these needed spiritual help and a special type of man to provide it. Settling a country means perpetual movement from place to place; newcomers seeking their first homes, oldtimers hearing of more beautiful and fertile spots and voyaging in search of them, and the Indians, naturally nomadic, never at rest unless in motion. The spirit of adventure, of discovery was abroad. Daring young pioneers were thrilling to penetrate all over the mysterious West. Hunters, trappers, lovers of the open life, fled before the thickening population out to the lonely woods and plains, where they lived solitary, or in small groups. Farmers from the stony-soiled eastern states heard of the rich lands waiting for them, packed their household goods and their families into wagons and started westward. The great money hunt was on as well. Traders were exploring every nook and corner for

the chance of barter. A fever of movement possessed the people. Opportunity hid just over the next hill, just beyond the next turn of the river, and they chased it as a lad chases butterflies. And beyond it all, in the great land of wolves and mountain lions and buffaloes, wandered the tribes of red men, worshiping false gods, sunk in superstition, but sunk no deeper perhaps than multitudes of white men worshiping the golden calf. Within the cities, too, were the beginnings of that restlessness and speed that have come to characterize the American modern metropolis. There was much stirring about in the towns; business shifted from point to point; manufactories sprung up, and laborers followed wherever the best chances seemed to lie, freely migrating from city to city. The whole country was in a more or less fluid state, dizzy with the whirl of opportunity and feverishly following one mirage after another.

Clearly, anyone who chose this field to labor in as a priest, had plenty of work cut out for him. Whether he went among the red men or the white, he had the same fundamental difficulties; namely, first to find his flock and then to hold it together. And where the nomadic spirit prevailed of going somewhere else to get something else, there was nothing to be expected but a dragging of anchors. The priest who would successfully shepherd this people had to be all things to all men. He must combine the stolid spiritual tenacity of the recluse with the holiday gayety of the adventurer. With everyone about him in constant motion, he must keep in motion, too. And the movement of the multitude was by no means regimental, with the priest merely keeping step as their chaplain. Each individual chose his own direction and his own terminus and made for it with every ounce of speed he possessed, catch him if you can. Not the quiet, confined, settled European town life, where age-old custom

could enable one to walk down the street blindfolded and greet one's old familiars at a certain spot and hour, because they must be there. This new country was a huge playground full of children let loose from the crowded classroom and running about in every sort of tangle after whatever their new-born fancy chose. Plenty of room here for everybody, all paths open, the pent-up restraints of centuries unloosed, millions of rainbows and a pot of gold at the foot of each. Today, it is true, we still play at this game, but we are more polished at it. We jump for the golden apple with more of a nonchalant and natural manner. We are not so naïve as were the forty-niners.

For a priest, this environment called for high apostolic qualities. He had to be with this movement, at its center and at every point besides, out to the circumference. He had to hold fast to the faith himself, as the core of his own life, and he had to keep each soul of his flock in touch with that faith. He must, therefore, have the sturdy homelike virtues of patience, kindness, simplicity. He must be affable, unwearied, never bored, straightforward and square. He must have romance in his soul also, the romance of the Gospel, the final gifts that St. Paul enumerates in his eulogy of charity. He must believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. In the midst of toil, discouragements and disappointments, delays and oppositions, he must keep steadily to his work in all its details, with no idea of surrender. All this implies physical gifts of strength, a driving power of body, a vivacity and energy that will sag under no strain, but will come up fresh for each new task that besets it.

This was the talk that Father De Smet gave young Damen at Turnhout, and Damen rose to it. How well De Smet gauged his man, after events reveal. The young student held in the bud the very qualities needed for the work—the combination of physical strength,

quiet determination of natural character, and the innate Dutch spirit of romance, that, turned to commercial ends, would have made him a wealthy trader, a celebrated explorer or colonist. Touched with the fire of the supernatural, it lifted him to be a great missionary for souls.

Damen went to M. de Nef, the superior of the school, and offered himself as a candidate for the Jesuit missions in America. M. de Nef had the unusual privilege of receiving applicants for the Society of Jesus, though himself not a member of the Order. His approval of Damen was ratified by the superiors of the Society, and Damen went to his home in Leur to tell his father and mother of his choice. A young man named Adrian Hendrickx had already applied as a Brother for the Missouri Mission and the two waited for a year in Holland until Father De Smet's work in Europe was finished. Meantime De Smet had gathered others for the missions—Father John Gleizal of France, who entered the Jesuits as a priest, Francis D'Hoop, a Belgian, and Father David Duparque, who was to join the diocese of Louisville, in Kentucky. They received final word to be prepared to sail with Father De Smet from Havre in October, 1837. They journeyed by stage through France by way of Paris to Havre. Arrived there, they found Father De Smet down with an attack of sickness so serious that the doctor forbade him to sail. Five days passed and he was not better. The day of departure arrived, the ship weighed anchor and sailed with the five men minus their leader. Whatever they felt about the situation, and it must have been sufficiently depressing, they were not more worried than Father De Smet. For him, it finally got beyond bearing and he solved the difficulty by cutting the knot. He eluded the doctor, made his way to the harbor, chartered a swift boat, overtook the departing ship and climbed aboard, to

the equal amazement and joy of his companions. The sea voyage restored his health. In twelve days, after an unusually swift and tranquil passage, they landed at New York.

The journey from New York to St. Louis, a thousand miles by airline, was not what we can easily make it today, a pleasure jaunt. A hundred years ago the heavy wagon was the only Pullman possible over roads that simply made themselves, whenever there were any roads at all. We have no record of Damen's journey, but it could not have been much more comfortable than De Smet's from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi, made only fourteen years before. That pioneer group carried their movables in wagons and went themselves on foot to Wheeling on the Ohio, floated on flatboats to Shawneetown in Illinois and walked the remaining distance to St. Louis. We may easily suppose that a considerable part of Damen's travel was done *pedibus apostolorum* over every condition of road and through every variety of weather. None the worse for their hardships, the party arrived safely in St. Louis and went at once to Florissant, Missouri, to begin their formal training as novices, on November 22, 1837.

A curious sequence of cause and effect comes to the surface here in connection with the work of Father Damen, showing how the best-laid plans of mice and men can go astray. It looks like a *non sequitur* to say that the French Revolution was the original founder of the great Holy Family parish in Chicago and the ultimate prime mover of all Father Damen's mission work all over the United States. But it is the fact. The French Directoire, in its campaign against Catholicism, hunted Father Charles Nerinckx out of Europe. He located in Kentucky and became its famous missionary. Later he went back to Europe to get recruits

for the work here. Nerinckx was not a Jesuit himself, but he brought De Smet back to America for the Society in 1823. And De Smet in turn went to Europe and brought back Damen. The Revolution builded better than it knew.

CHAPTER IV

HIS NEW HOME

THE village of Florissant lies some fifteen miles from St. Louis and a few miles from the Missouri River, in the Florissant Valley, a spot that for beauty and fertility answers to its name. It is one of the oldest inhabited places in the Mississippi region, as old places go in a young country. Politically it had swung from French to Spanish to French and finally to United States possession within forty years. But through all its changes, the inhabitants were of French descent. As an inland town, remote from the facilities of transportation that make for commercial success, Florissant was destined never to grow and it remains today almost as quiet a place as when young Damen first saw it nearly a hundred years ago. Bishop Du Bourg had given several hundred acres of this valley land to the Jesuits, and here they established the second novitiate of the Society in the United States.

In his extremely interesting and accurate *Saint Ferdinand de Florissant, The Story of an Ancient Parish,* Father Garraghan has given us a description of the Florissant Valley as it is today, unchanged in all essentials from the days when the Jesuits first saw it.

On either side the horizon is broken by a line of gently sloping hills, the land between being quite level to the eye so as to suggest the bed of a prehistoric lake. So indeed did it appear to Bradbury, the naturalist, who passed along here in 1836. The soil is fertile to a degree, being rich, heavy loam of an 'inky blackness,' as pictured by Timothy Flint, the Congregationalist clergyman, who in

the twenties of the last century wrote up the agricultural possibilities of Missouri for the benefit of Eastern readers. If the visit be on the eve of harvest time a great panoramic stretch of rural charms unfolds itself to the eye. Fields of ripened oats and timothy, more often of brightly golden wheat, wave gently in the soft June air—fields, too, of the amplest dimensions, running back from the roadside to the hillocks on either flank. It matters not that the soil has been tilled for a century and a quarter; it still yields copiously of its stored-up wealth even to the least industrious of farmers. Such is the Florissant Valley, in extent some two by twelve miles, Florissant being French for 'blooming' or 'flourishing,' the apt name which the early Creole inhabitants found from the beginning for this genuine garden-spot of Missouri.

Charming as was this location of the Jesuit novitiate, we still remember that idyllic scenery, while undoubtedly nourishing to the soul, falls considerably short of feeding, clothing and housing the body. Golden harvests of real wheat do not rise up under the poet's wand, but over the plowman's furrow. The first thing the little community at Florissant had to face was the problem of living. The only practicable way of doing this was to get it out of the ground. And that meant they had to work. They were poor and, while they could hire some help, much remained that they themselves must do.

The standard novitiate training is largely an indoor process, mental and physical. Much meditation, spiritual reading, self-study, with enough outdoor exercise to preserve the balance of health. But when fields must be plowed and corn sown and harvests reaped and wood cut for fires, another standard of training must perforce prevail. All this Arnold Damen and his companions had to do, and their after lives reveal that they managed to combine with it the meditative training as well. Wisdom builds her own house, and the wise man when put to it, will read as much from the furrows of

a plow as from the pages of a book; will gather in the grain and meanwhile plan for his future spiritual harvest; will find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. These novices carried their spiritual life with them into the fields and woods whenever necessity called them there, just as in later years they sustained it through all the distractions of their missionary years in the priesthood.

So we see them putting in the corn, tying up the vines, planting their orchards, their vegetable garden, hewers of wood and drawers of water, singing hymns of praise to God and, when their work was done, saying their Rosary together on their road homeward.

In spite of all the outdoor claims upon them, it must not be supposed that they had no time for secluded study. Their day then would be the equivalent of two days now in a normal man's schedule. They rose at half past four, retired at a little after nine. With each day perfectly mapped ahead, we can easily surmise how little waste time slipped through their fingers and how much orderly work they could pack away in those seventeen hours. And with each one helping the other as they went along, reducing the wear of friction to a minimum, they successfully solved the puzzling problem of how to run a farm and go to school at the same time.

Many of them had to learn the English language. Damen found this quite difficult at the start, though his facile use of it in after years would not suggest that. It is remarkable, in fact, how thoroughly these pioneers mastered the English idiom, literary as well as colloquial, with an accuracy of pronunciation, too, that eliminated brogue almost completely.

Their housing was primitive. The pile of modern buildings that today occupy the old site of the novitiate, the splendid chapel, commodious study and dining

halls, the gardens and recreation grounds, were in those days merely a few log cabins in a wilderness. A picture of the place in 1847, ten years after Damen's time, shows us two buildings joined L-fashion, suggesting rather a corn-crib than a house. They had shelter, and very little more.

We have been able to discover but one letter written by Damen to his home and this was sent from Florissant during his novitiate. It is probable that he did not write many letters to Holland after he left. Later on in life he regretted that he had not done more. Brother Thomas Kelly, S.J., who celebrated his golden jubilee as a Jesuit a few years ago, was one of Damen's recruits to the Society as the result of a mission in Brooklyn in the 'seventies. When he was leaving for the novitiate, he tells us, Father Damen advised him to write home whenever he could, adding, 'It is one of the things I regret, now that it is too late, that I did not write to my people oftener.'

The letter we have is from the *Godsdienstvriend,* literally the 'Friend of Religion,' a periodical similar to our *Ave Maria.* Evidently the editor, in obtaining the letter from the family of Damen, believed that his readers were interested in what the Dutch missionaries were doing in America. It is headed, 'An Extract from a Letter of Mr. A. Damen, of the Novitiate S.J. in N. America.'

A.M.D.G.

St. Stanislaus . . . 1839

Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters:

In my last letter I had decided not to write to you again until I had received an answer. However, since no missionaries arrived this year from Europe, I consider it my duty to gratify your great desire. Possibly I would not be so slow in my correspondence were it not that I have almost forgotten my mother tongue. It is a real task

for me to write in Dutch. I have constantly to consult the dictionary, or to ask Brother Hendriks and Carissimus D'Hoop for words that will express my ideas. You must not therefore be astonished if I use an English or a French word now and then. At times I can't tell whether the word I am using is good Dutch.

I am not going to say anything about bodily things, for a religious, especially a companion of Jesus Christ, must live as though he had no body. All his thoughts, words and deeds should be directed toward a single end, namely, God.

In my last I mentioned that several 'nations' (tribes or settlements) have frequently begged our Superior to send them some of our Fathers. At length he had the pleasure of gratifying the desire of two of those 'nations.' His Reverence has sent Father Helias and Father Buschots to Jefferson. Their parish or mission extends over 150 miles and consists of a mixture of Germans and Frenchmen, with a sprinkling of Irish and Americans. The bulk are Germans and French. However, the Irish are quite numerous, as appears from the fact that 600 Irish were present at a procession recently held by the Fathers. The Fathers have little trouble in practicing the Evangelical Counsels. They have no lay Brother, no servant. (I do not mean a housekeeper, for you know religious have no female servants.) They have no furniture. When they go to visit their parishes they must carry all the requisites for Mass with them. The Mass is said in a house. The only church is in the village where they reside.

The other mission established by Fr. Superior is among the Indians, 1300 miles distant from here. It is a poor tribe [Pottawatomies] which has for a long time begged for one or two of our Fathers. Fr. Superior has sent them Fr. De Smet (who came last year with us from Europe) and Fr. Verreydt, a Belgian, and a Spanish lay Brother. Thus we have at present four priests and two Brothers among the Indians.

These missions seem to promise well. Let me tell you something about them that may be of interest to you. I get my information from the letters of Father De Smet. In his first letter he describes his journey and, among

other things, he mentions coming across a young Indian who is a former student of our college and is at present Chief of his tribe. He showed himself very affectionate and friendly toward Fr. De Smet and promised to build him a chapel, on condition that he would draw a few French families to the neighborhood.

One day as Fr. De Smet was walking along the river bank a black man accosted him. He told Father that he took him for a Catholic priest and asked him if he was right. Upon Fr. De Smet assuring him that he was a priest, the man proceeded to make a general Confession with great piety and devotion, shedding tears of repentance for having offended God's infinite goodness and majesty; tears, too, of joy because it was so many years since he had seen a priest. Being 88 years old, the man suspected that it would be his last Confession.

Bidding the old man adieu, Fr. De Smet traveled on and came upon another tribe whose Chief had also studied at our college, and who was very anxious to have one or two of our Fathers to come and live among them.

Later Fr. De Smet discovered a fourth tribe, known as the Pawnees, who live underground. A Presbyterian minister had offered himself to come and live among them. They replied that they did not want a devil to dwell in their tribe, and that they would take measures to prevent him from settling there. You see, these poor Indians are firmly convinced that all heretical ministers bring the devil with them. They are very eager for one of our Fathers. It would seem that this tribe is the most cruel. A short time ago they burned a girl alive. They number some 20,000.

On March 31st, Frs. De Smet and Verreydt, with a Spanish lay Brother, arrived among the Pottawatomies, which tribe they are to evangelize. Some 1,200 Indians, dressed in their best costumes, their faces painted in the latest fashion, were waiting impatiently for the steamer on which they were to come. They began their mission by teaching them the Christian doctrine. For although a few among the tribe have been baptized by Mr. Richard, a priest who knows the prayers in their tongue and who visits them once every two years, yet they are ignorant

of Christian doctrine. They do not even know how to bless themselves. Fr. De Smet tells us that he has had about twenty-six baptisms, that the children are good and docile, that this tribe has no word in their vocabulary for cursing and swearing except the word 'dog.' 'Dog' is their biggest curse word. He mentions, too, that the Chief of the tribe is very generous, especially toward our Fathers. He offered them four log cabins for their homes and promised to build them a chapel. On Corpus Christi the foundation was laid for the chapel and the Cross was placed on it. Whatever time Fr. De Smet can spare from religious services he spends as carpenter, making doors, windows and pews for the chapel. They have planned to go once a week and preach among another tribe with the help of an interpreter.

To give you an idea of the progress that is being made by our holy religion among the Americans, our Rt. Rev. Bishop told that in the course of last year he has built 20 new churches for Catholics in Missouri alone—that's the State we live in. This year 19 are being built. Also that more than 300 heretics have sworn off their errors and have returned to the bosom of the true Church, this not counting the converts among the Indians. His Lordship told us also that he had in his diocese 10,000 to 12,000 Catholics who were without priests to minister to them.

The amount of good that's being done by missions is incredible. For here in America, as in Europe, there are numberless poor sinners hardened in wickedness, for whose conversion nothing is more effective than a mission or spiritual retreat. However, here one can, so to speak, wink at their disorderly lives, in view of their ignorance and the lack of priests among them. For indeed how can one look for fruits from a soil that is untilled—a soil that has never received the seed of the Gospel or, if received, the seed has been dried up, not sprinkled with the dew of Christian teaching? This is the sad experience of this country. How many there are who see a priest but once a year! How many have been baptized but never instructed! There is reason therefore to pardon their disorderly lives; and what should still more move us to

tenderness and pity for these poor people is the fact that they persist in begging for priests. Would to God that the good to be accomplished here, and the scarcity of priests were realized in the seminaries of Europe! Then many would break the miserable ties that bind them to their parents, their friends and country; many would bid a permanent farewell to all that keeps them chained to their country and hinders them from answering God's call.

I have not many things to tell about our missions among the 'Guikapoes' [Kickapoos], a savage tribe among whom two of our priests, namely Frs. Hoecken and Ysvogels (both from the seminary of Bois-le-Duc) and a Belgian lay Brother are working. This mission seems to be making slow progress, although several baptisms have taken place and a number of children, having been cleansed from original sin by the Sacrament of Baptism, have died in the Lord, and consequently are praying in heaven for the conversion of their parents. The reason of their slow advance is that the Chief of the tribe gets 1,500 francs from the Protestants as a bribe to make him favor their preachers and their mission. Yet, in spite of all this, in spite of their gifts and the threats of the Chief, they make no progress. Not so long ago the Chief began to play a rather strange rôle, but to his shame and his hurt. He had bribed a man, a kind of lawyer or adviser among the Indians, with a sum of money. This fellow was to feign death. Then the Chief would come and raise him from the dead through the power of the Protestant religion *à la Calvin*. The lawyer had practiced his part well. He died and the Chief brought him back to life. Then he started telling the Indians that he had been in heaven, mentioning all the wonderful things he had seen, and so on. But here came the end of his cheating and the beginning of his shame. Fr. Hoecken, having been notified of what was going on among the tribe, sent word to the lawyer to come and see him. He did not dare to ignore Fr. Hoecken's summons and in an assembly of the tribe the Father questioned him concerning what he had heard and observed there. The poor lawyer, expecting to fool the Father as he had the Indians, spoke so rapidly and

so stupidly that he contradicted himself and denied what he had said at the start.

Then the Father in a serious tone of authority said to him: 'It is clear that you are a humbug and a fraud. It is clear that what you have told about heaven are your own inventions. I want you to confess before these people that what you have told us are lies. Unless you do this I am going to call down upon you the punishment of the Great Spirit.'

The lawyer, frightened by these threats and fearing the wrath of the Great Spirit, confessed his deceit. Father Hoecken, however, was not satisfied. 'I must insist,' he said to the lawyer, 'that for three Sundays you will come to Mass and declare before the congregation that your death and resurrection was a lie. Unless you comply with my command I shall ask the Great Spirit to chastise you.' The man promised to do what the Father had commanded and he was very punctual in carrying out his promise.

I mentioned just now that Fr. Hoecken has Fr. Ysvogels for his companion. This arrangement has been changed. Fr. Aelen has received a letter telling him that Fr. Hoecken lives now at a distance of some 16 miles from Fr. Ysvogels. He is working there among a tribe that numbers 800 Catholics. He lives in real poverty. He has no lay Brother with him, has no church nor house. A poor tent made of buffalo skins serves him for both house and church.

I could fill a book if I were to write all particulars. It is such a task to express myself in my mother tongue. However, I must say something about our mission among the Pottawatomies. According to several reports of Fr. De Smet, he has in the space of six months baptized 118. This shows us what progress our holy religion is making there. He writes us also that two chiefs of a tribe some two thousand strong came to visit him accompanied by 40 soldiers. These people all showed great kindness toward the Fathers and asked them to smoke the calumet, or pipe of peace, with them. Father De Smet showed the chiefs the chapel. They seemed to be very interested in the explanation the Father gave them of the Cross, the

altar and a few pictures representing Our Lord's passion. They begged him to come and pay them a visit and made him a present of a tobacco bag made of the skin of a beaver. In his turn the Father presented them with a rosary and a brass crucifix, which they accepted with thanks, kissing it and putting it about their neck. On taking leave of the Fathers, they embraced them with the greatest affection.

To form an idea of an Indian village, imagine a large number of cabins and tents, all made of the bark of trees, of buffalo hides, of roughly woven linen, of twig and rush-woven mats, all dirty-looking and making a terrible sight, some large, some small, all made in different fashions, placed at haphazard without plan. . . .

Would to God that I were able to give you an idea of the great happiness which I here enjoy! But this is impossible. No one but he who experiences it can understand how happy we are. Give unceasing thanks to God, for my happiness is unspeakable.

I remain respectfully,

Your obedient son,

A. Damen,
Novice of the Society of Jesus.

Although this letter tells us very little about Florissant, it does tell us much about Damen. It is an unusually mature letter for a novice. Save for the solemn announcement to his parents that he will write nothing to them of 'bodily things,' there is no preachifying in the letter, a favorite novice attitude. He states, too, and rather bluntly, that he is rapidly losing his mother tongue, without seeming to consider that it might be something not altogether pleasant for his parents to hear. They might imagine that after forgetting his mother tongue, he would soon perhaps be forgetting them. But outside of these defects, the whole letter foreshadows the future Damen. The missionary spirit is strong in him. He seems to lean decidedly to life among the Indians. He is fascinated with the thought

of converting entire tribes. He looks ahead in terms of the whole of America and already craves for more workers to evangelize the nation. One can sense his restrained impatience to be out and doing. He sees the need of men for the whites as well as for the Indians, not realizing that his own missions to the whites are to have much to do with the organization of the Church in the United States. He appreciates all the hardships of the life ahead, but shows no signs of timidity or shirking. On the contrary, his tone is one of confident eagerness, virile and unafraid. The offhand manner in which he speaks of forgetting his native tongue shows how thoroughly he was beginning to identify himself with his adopted country, and he is entirely and unaffectedly happy in the vision he sees before him. All these characteristics develop and intensify in him with the years.

After two years Arnold Damen made his first vows, thereby becoming a recognized member of the Jesuits. He remained at Florissant, however, for two years more, employed in a steady routine of study, reviewing his classics, advancing his English, preparing for teaching. His spiritual life interwove with his study all through. Mass every day, frequent Communion, meditation and spiritual reading. These were to be part of his daily duty all his life. Then he was sent to St. Louis to teach.

Here the Jesuits had a growing college for both day and boarding students, the latter coming mostly from the South and from Latin America. This was Damen's first direct contact with the medley of American life.

There is a vague tradition, for which we can discover no documentary evidence, that Damen was not a success in teaching. If this is so, it cannot be for the reason that he did not work at it. It is impossible to imagine him going into anything without energy. It

is difficult, also, to suppose that he was not clear and definite in his method. His sermons, later, are models of clarity; his business organizing in after years shows a natural instinct for definiteness. It was very probably the case that he found trouble in adjusting himself to the temperament of the American boy. I believe that no one can train a type of boy he has not grown up with. Damen grew up with American life from the age of twenty-three, but he never had a chance to be an American boy. There was his handicap. He got along perfectly with men, because he grew up with them and caught their characteristics at first hand. The Dutch boy he knew intimately; but all his experience of the American boy was, so to say, at second hand. He was already outside the magic ring of boyhood when he first met American boyhood, and he could never hope to capture its essential flavor. After dreamy old Brabant and placid Florissant, the sudden plunge into the electric maelstrom of American youth must have given him something of a shock. Brabant and Florissant were scarcely the atmosphere to prepare one for American boy life in the 'forties, with the call of the open surging in its blood and the wild West beckoning only a few miles away.

Yet again, in the light of what we certainly do know about Damen, it is hard to see him, under whatever difficulties of controlling a new type of character, as not managing his classes even though he did not understand them thoroughly. Only a few years later we find him managing every variety of people in the most businesslike American fashion, with absolute success. If it be true, then, as the tradition has it, that Damen did not hit it off with boys, the only answer is, that boys, like Nature, are wonderful.

On the other hand, there seems to be indirect evidence, at least, that Damen did good work as a teacher. During his regency, complaints were sent to the Gen-

eral, Father Roothaan, that the scholastics in St. Louis were too much engaged in work outside their sphere of duty. Their studies and their spiritual life, it was alleged, were seriously interfered with. The occasion for the complaint arose from the effort made by the college to build additional schoolrooms for city boys who wished to attend school, but who could not be accommodated for lack of space. The college had no money, and the boys either had to go to distinctly Protestant schools, or go without. In his letter of reply to the General, Father Verhaegan, the Vice-Provincial, writes as follows on the nineteenth of July, 1843:

> This criticism, which your Paternity states in general terms, can be applied to only one man here, and scarcely applied, at that; or if so, only for a short period. There was question of preparing schoolrooms for city students. The college was unable to meet the expense. Meantime, the boys, to the number of more than two hundred, were attending Protestant schools at the risk of losing faith and morals. Kindling with pious zeal, Mr. Damen offered his services to complete the work. He begged alms from our citizens; and when others had no heart for the work, he finished it up without any expense whatever to the college.
>
> Some of the contributors gave not money, but labor. So Damen had to deal at times with carpenters and other workmen to give them directions. But whatever he did was done with the approval of Father Rector.
>
> This young man, who by his industry has rescued some three hundred boys from irreligious schools, or from the streets, to train them up in letters and religion, seems to me to be deserving of the highest praise.

From which it seems logical to conclude that for an unsuccessful teacher, Damen took rather a considerable interest in schoolrooms.

In any event, looking backward over his life, it was

fortunate for the Catholic Church that Damen was not assigned to be a teacher in the schools. Providence had assigned him to a wider field, and with his careful obedience to divine guidance, he was eventually destined to take up a work, only a small part of which would be the founding of a future university.

His studies went on and he was ordained priest in 1844, in his twenty-ninth year.

CHAPTER V

EARLY YEARS IN THE PRIESTHOOD

FATHER DAMEN had passed through the assigned stages of preparation for his life work and was facing a future that he himself saw only in the faintest outline. He had prayed much. His intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin, ripening since early childhood, was, by this time, matured and settled in his life. He had meditated profoundly and sensibly, planning his life so as to have all its energies radiate from a central core of obedience. This will appear as we see him in later action. He had definitely cut himself off from his home and country and had set himself to learn to love other peoples and other ways. There had been difficulty in all this, fatigue, discomfort—a new language to make over into his native tongue, the toil of the fields, the inconveniences of log cabin life, the hampering conditions of study, the sudden plunge at last into the whirlpool that we call American life, and the dubious feeling that maybe he would not be able to understand it, or keep pace with it. A complex interweaving this, of both physical and mental hardships that could depress and discourage a soul not sturdily set for any hazard.

And now the decks were cleared for action. The wide field of the priesthood opened out a limitless horizon before him. In what direction to travel? Where was the gateway to the great romance that he had heard calling to him since his boyhood in Brabant? He had crossed the sea to convert the wild Indian. Now the tide of white men rolling westward needed help per-

haps as much as any Indian. The work before him seemed endless and the laborers were few. Nobody ever suggested college life to him again. His career was therefore destined to be more directly like that of Him who went about doing good. The first duties assigned to him pointed that way. He was made assistant priest at St. Francis Xavier's Church, in St. Louis.

Direct contact with souls awakens in the priest the spark of a new life, and if he feeds the spark it will grow to a flame that illumines his own soul as well as those of his flock. The merely academic view of life absorbed from books alone is a thin and ghostly thing compared with the depth and perspective gained by touching life at first hand. Books are to life what the tentative plan is to the building, or what reading about war is to fighting it. And it was building and fighting that was all the time lurking in the depths of Father Damen's soul and struggling to come to the surface. He must himself have been conscious of the hidden power in him, for in the period just after his ordination, a period of pause and survey, while he was attending to the simpler duties of the parish priest, we find him studying the situation and planning and praying for his future efficiency among the people. And he decided that it would be through his preaching that he would achieve it.

On the surface it seemed rather a random choice, perhaps a piece of foolish self-deception. The glamour of large audiences, the thrill of swaying popular sentiment have made many less simple men than Father Damen persuade themselves that they were accomplished orators, when a canvass of the question would give the minority but a single vote. It did appear that Father Damen was drifting toward this class. Father Coppens writes of him then: 'He had not developed any notable oratorical powers. In fact, I remember an old lady remarking that when she wanted to get a good

sleep, she could do so without fail by listening to one of his sermons. He felt his deficiency in this respect.' This 'feeling his deficiency' was a good sign.

Nevertheless, he clung tenaciously to the idea, though he did not talk much about it. Neither did he waste any time dreaming about it. He proceeded with the parish routine, only under his hands it was always more than routine. He brought over into the spiritual field the Hollander's ambition of steadily getting more land out of the sea. The aggressive character of his later work began immediately to appear. Nothing hurried about it, or fitful or spectacular; just what we might call a continuous poldering, one bit of work added to another, with sufficient indications that beneath it all was a spirit that kept reaching out for more and yet more. Turning over the baptismal records for those years at St. Francis Xavier's Church we come upon the brief entries of baptism with their short additional remarks, and the signature *A. Damen, S.J.* Here we shall find on one page a note stating that an old man is brought into the Church with all the sacred rites. Further down, the record of a woman baptized hurriedly and secretly on her death bed; and immediately below, her little servant, a slave, baptized at the same time. Again an entire family mentioned in one entry—and so it goes, page after page.

It is easily seen that these records imply much more than is written down. Father Damen had to find these people, keep in touch with them, instruct them, and follow them along as far as possible after baptism. To keep at this work day by day and year after year is peculiarly exhausting. The way in which individual cases can multiply, overlap and entangle is bewildering. And the sudden emergencies that are always occurring with some individual somewhere along the line will put the strongest nervous system to the test. Father Damen did a great amount of this, yet it was but a

single feature of his daily work. Along the pathway of his routine occupations Damen kept constantly watching for the chance of bringing outsiders into the Church. He had a keen eye for any opening that presented itself and he followed up an opportunity with quick and sure judgment. Merely commonplace happenings, even incidents that opened unpleasantly, would be skillfully turned by him into a conversion. In his sermon on *Confession* he narrates one of these himself.

Some years ago [he tells us], when I was pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in St. Louis, I was called to a sick lady, and when I came to the house I found with the sick lady a Protestant doctor. I asked the doctor to leave me alone with the lady for a few moments and he did so. In the meantime I heard the lady's Confession and administered to her the consolations of our holy religion, the Sacraments of the Church. Having got through I said to the doctor that he might come in. But the doctor was a Yankee, and you all know that the Yankees are a very inquisitive people and always want to know the ins and outs of everything; and so, the doctor said to me:

'What have you been doing, sir?'

'Well, doctor, that is a very impertinent question. But as I know what you are driving at, I will answer you. I heard the Confession of that lady.'

'You do not pretend to forgive sin, do you?' said the doctor.

'Yes, sir, I do.'

'Well, sir,' continued the doctor, 'that is a very extraordinary power.'

'Yes, sir, it is. But you do not believe in that power, doctor?' said I.

'No, sir,' said he. 'No, no, I do not believe in any such nonsense as that.'

'Well, doctor,' said I, 'do you believe that the Apostles had the power of forgiving sins?'

'No, sir, I do not.'

'Then, doctor, what did our divine Saviour mean, when, breathing upon His Apostles, He said, *Receive ye the*

Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them? What did Christ mean, doctor, at that time?'

'Well, I declare,' said he, 'that is a tough question.'

'A little tough, doctor. Will you be so kind as to answer it?'

'Well,' said the doctor, 'I am not prepared for that now. I am here on professional business, and am not ready to answer you now, but I will see you again.'

The doctor was a sincere and honest man, and when he arrived at his office he remembered his promise to see me again and, knowing that he should be familiar with his subject in order to talk with me, he procured himself some books on Catholic doctrine and read them through very carefully, until he became convinced that Confession is of divine origin. He became interested in the matter and procured more books, and finally became convinced that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of God.

Three weeks after that there came a rap at my door. 'Walk in,' and the doctor walked in.

'Father,' said he, 'will you be kind enough to hear my Confession?'

'Eh, doctor?! Hear your Confession? Why, you do not believe in that?'

'I do, Father,' says he, 'and I believe in all the other doctrines of the Catholic Church. I am thoroughly convinced that it is the only true Church and I would like to make my Confession.'

'All right, doctor, get on your knees.' He got on his knees and I heard his Confession and received him into the Church.

After three years of assistance in parish work, he was appointed first pastor of St. Francis Xavier's Church in 1847, a position he was to hold for ten years. Here, for the first time, his power began to reveal itself. From his experiences during the three previous years, the practical lesson he had learned was the value of organization.

Nowadays, organization is an old idea among us and an overworked idea as well. For many years it has

served as the battle-cry of efficiency in America until people are beginning to realize that organization is turning into a form of centralization that threatens to strangle them. Politics, labor, charities, business, literature, studies, 'movements' of all kinds, have steadily shown a growing tendency to draw the individual into the complicated machinery of organization, to stifle his personality and to stamp him as merely a standardized piece of equipment. It is the abuse of a good idea. In union there is strength, it is true, but when the union is too close, when the clock is wound up too tight, it will not go at all.

Back in the 'forties, however, we were rather at the other extreme, more or less scrambled along all lines. Danger lurked here, too. As a single evidence of this condition, we were then directly headed for the Civil War, only fifteen years away. Organization then was just what we needed everywhere, a sane adjustment of huge national forces that were growing so rapidly that they were getting out of hand. Only a wise man would see this at the time, because we were infatuated with our mere size and power. And only a strong man could control these conflicting currents and turn them into a single stream.

The Catholic Church was one of these forces. She had had her own experience of the disunion that permeated the country, a disunion we may consider unavoidable owing to the rapid, sporadic and varied developments effervescing simultaneously in every quarter. Father Damen was quick to see that as his work grew, the only way to keep it unified and steady was to give it the spine of organization. He did not try to do too much at once. He was not of the type that gathers a crowd, thrills them with an 'inspirational talk,' and then passes on, registering another movement 'established.' He knew that an organization is like a building, stone laid upon stone, under the per-

sonal supervision of the architect. In 1848, he began very simply and quietly by starting the Young Men's Sodality. The first idea he had in mind as the object of this Sodality was a religious union of college alumni in St. Louis, to keep the old students of the University together and to preserve their faith. It began thus, but many others were anxious to share in its benefits, and the original idea spread to include Catholic laymen of St. Louis. Professional men joined in large numbers, lawyers, doctors, engineers. Bankers and business men of influence came in. Its register shows a long list of the best-known Catholics of St. Louis at that time. These men were encouraged and instructed to spread the faith. They responded, not only by the good example of their lives, but by aggressive work in winning back careless Catholics to the steady practice of their religion and in assisting in the conversion of non-Catholics. By 1856 it numbered three hundred of the most prominent men of St. Louis.

This form of sodality work, namely, gathering from a whole city to form one body, would not be practical today, nor is it needed now as then, when parishes were not so thoroughly organized. But it remains as an example of the possibilities of sodality work. During the ten years he directed this St. Louis sodality, Damen gave to it such steady and personal attention that from a small beginning it grew to be a strong religious force in the city for fifty years. From it finally, as from a nucleus and a model, grew all the other sodalities of the city of St. Louis. All Father Damen's work had in it this element of fruitful reproduction. Even though his original planting died out with time, it was not until it had scattered abroad the seeds of future harvests. He had seized thoroughly the idea of the vital importance of having roots to a work that is intended to last and he was willing to spend time planting the roots deep. He was not attracted to occupations that brought only ap-

plause as their result. He did not allow monotony to stale his energy, and he showed none of the restlessness of temperament that tires easily when held to one line and is satisfied to be superficial if only it can often change. Like the successful oil driller, he had the practical instinct to locate spiritual values, and when he chose a prospect he drilled persistently.

This appears in his work with the Young Men's Sodality. Evaluating the group, he saw that within them was another group who could gain more spiritually by adding something to the ordinary sodality routine. To these men he suggested the idea of a special retreat. He invited them to come as guests to the college at a time when they could afford the leisure, and to spend several days there in making the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It was a turning point in the lives of them all. At the end of the retreat four of them decided to enter the Society of Jesus. And all of them became permanent influences for good in the Catholic life of the city.

This was apparently the first retreat of its kind given in St. Louis and, as far as we are aware, in the West. How widely it has spread since that day, everyone knows who is at all in touch with Catholic life. This type of retreat is now a part of all Catholic school work, regularly scheduled to be made by the students once each year. It has penetrated in one form or another into most Catholic organizations who yearly make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, following Father Damen's plan as closely as is possible. And the recent opening in many places of the houses for laymen's retreats is but the flowering out of this first retreat in St. Louis University.

The devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary was the favorite of Father Damen. This devotion, originating in Paris, was introduced into St. Francis Church

by Father Gleizal, his predecessor. Damen developed it into one of the most popular devotions in his church. From there it spread through all the Jesuit churches in the West, another instance of the broad fruitfulness of his work. When Damen came to Chicago he chose the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the third Sunday of August, as the day for laying the corner-stone of Holy Family Church. He put all his parish work under her protection.

In addition to these two organizations and his administration of church matters as pastor, Damen always did his full share of the regular pastoral duties, sick calls, preaching, Confessions, the parish school, instruction of converts. In the first year of his pastorate, what was called the Asiatic cholera swept St. Louis with all the deadliness of our more recent 'flu' attacks. Father Damen was everywhere during this plague, expending his great physical strength to exhaustion. He was among those who were recognized by the city as having done remarkable service to the stricken people.

Father Murphy, who came from New York to St. Louis in 1851 to assume the office of Vice-Provincial for the western Jesuits, records his admiration of St. Francis Xavier's parish among his first impressions. He writes to the General, Father Beckx:

> The two pastors, Fathers Damen and Loretan, are prudent. The piety of the parishioners and of the two Sodalities is remarkable for this country. . . . I have never seen anywhere in America so many Communions of men. What a fine meeting every Sunday morning of the Arch-confraternity of the Immaculate Heart! When I think of New York, these things strike me very forcibly. It is all because our Fathers here are allowed free play and their influence is very great. Their knowledge of English amazes me more and more every day. Not only do they speak and write well, but some of them preach per-

fectly. This is what I had been told in New York and elsewhere.

At about the same time Bishop Van de Velde of Chicago, writing of Catholic conditions in the West, says:

In St. Francis Xavier's Church, St. Louis, there are more Confessions, Communions, and especially more conversions of non-Catholics than in other churches.

Father Verdin, then the President of St. Louis University, describing the work done in the church, says that there are five Masses at the high altar on every Sunday and feast day, the church crowded at all Masses. At least two sermons are preached on these days. On Sundays there are five hundred Communions, and on First Fridays and feast days, two hundred. 'I say,' he concludes, 'and it is the truth, that the church is our joy and our glory.'

A little later, in 1856, near the end of Damen's pastorate there, Father Wippern writes: 'The sermons in our church produce great fruit, as we may infer from the immense crowds of people and the use of the Sacraments, which is extraordinary for this part of the country.'

Father Murphy, all through his term of office, continues to be impressed by Damen. The winter of 1851-52 was a hard one in St. Louis, with great suffering among the poor, many of whom were on the verge of starvation. Damen always watched over the poor and, what is more, he understood them. He felt as one of them and he could do things with them and for them that they would resent at other hands. On this occasion the immediate and pressing need was food. It had to be got to the needy in large quantities and in a hurry. Damen saw that the only practicable solution was to establish a food station. For this he collected funds himself through the city, started the

station and carried it through the emergency, supporting hundreds of families. All who came from any part of the city were taken care of. The only drawback to the enterprise, as we view it today, was the name that it had. It was called the *Soup House,* hardly a legend to tempt a delicate appetite. We like to believe that Damen did not invent the name.

Father Murphy writes of this relief work in a letter to Father Beckx:

> The winter has been a very severe one. The kitchen for the poor, known as the *Soup House,* started and supported by Father Damen, has fed a great number of families. One can say that he is at the head of the charities of St. Louis.

Again, in 1853, he reports to Beckx:

> The great good being done in our church is a subject of edification to the whole town. At St. Xavier's there is always some devotion to maintain the fervor of the faithful. Confessions are very numerous. Something is there, as a matter of fact, that electrifies the most indifferent. Father Damen, a Hollander, is the soul of it all—a zealous worker, ardent and courageous by nature, with robust health and gifted with uncommon eloquence, he suffices for everything and carries everything along with him. He has, too, the talent of gaining the good will of the clergy and of securing their co-operation. Many Protestants owe their conversion to him.

Like every man of energy, Damen was not without his critics. Toward the end of his pastorate in St. Louis, complaints were made that he catered to the rich. Father De Smet, taking up Damen's defense, answered this in a letter to Father Beckx, dated May 13, 1856.

> Reverend Father Provincial, [he writes] has asked the Consultors to say a word to your Paternity about Father Damen, because of certain ideas concerning him, er-

roneous in my opinion, which have been addressed to you. As pastor and missionary in a large American city, I think you would be hard put to it to find his equal in the whole country. For many years he has been working indefatigably, with much edification and great and consoling fruits in the vineyard of the Lord. He has introduced into St. Louis many works of piety with great success. Several charitable institutions owe to him their existence and support. The number of conversions he has made among Protestants and infidels is very large. He has brought back to the practice of their religion a great multitude of Catholics who were weak and unsteady in the Faith. The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin which he has established in St. Louis and over which he presides, is made up of the best men of the city, over three hundred gentlemen of all ranks of society. All the Bishops who assisted at the Provincial Council of St. Louis last October were witnesses of the zeal of the Sodality and the great good which results from it for the whole city. He possesses the esteem, the respect and the admiration of most Catholics of the city. The rich draw on their purses for him much more readily than for anyone else to aid him in his charities and his holy enterprises. The rich also have need of counsel, sometimes much more than the poor, and they address themselves by preference to him. This sometimes gives rise to talk and causes a little umbrage.

Just now Father Damen is contemplating the erection of an industrial school under the care of the Sisters of Mercy, as an offset to schools of their kind among the Protestants, who do much to pervert the children of the Catholic poor. He has been engaged in this venture scarcely two months and already the subscriptions amount to more than sixteen thousand dollars. With four thousand dollars, which he expects to obtain before long, the school will be founded and two hundred children at least will be saved from the hands of the sectaries.

CHAPTER VI

THE GIFT OF PREACHING

WRITING of Damen in 1853, Father Murphy says he is 'gifted with uncommon eloquence.' This could not have been said of him a few years previously. Although from the start Damen had aimed at being an effective preacher, his early efforts, as we have noted, were failures. Instead of being a tonic in the pulpit, he was a soporific. Partly owing, no doubt, to his yet incomplete mastery of English, he fumbled his language. He lacked directness and confidence. His thoughts sprawled about without articulation or sequence. Strange, one might have said, that a man of so practical a mind should continue to be so impractical in this; a pity that he wasted time trying to talk that he could employ in useful work.

No one knew better than Damen that he was not doing well at his preaching. But there was something in him that told him to go ahead. When he saw that evidently he was not improving, in fact at a standstill, he resolved to call for special help from God. He made a vow never in his life to decline any task that superiors might assign him, if God would grant him the gift of preaching. Father Coppens tells us the result: 'Suddenly his success in preaching became extraordinary. He drew immense audiences, filled the largest churches and by his earnestness touched the hardest hearts.' This remarkably sudden transition from futility to power in preaching was regarded on all sides with astonishment.

We may add here that Father Damen was true to

his side of the contract. His vow, a most difficult one when we consider it carefully, was not lightly made, nor lightly fulfilled. As long as he lived, in big and little things, he responded to the smallest wish of his superiors. He was the gainer in both ways. He acquired the visible power of preaching and with it the inner virtue of a perfect obedience.

Damen's desire to be a great preacher was not based upon any craving for literary distinction. The academic sermon, a poor thing at best for the people, was never his ideal. It would even seem that he turned away from the merely literary as a possible hindrance to direct effectiveness. He had studied the best models in Latin and Greek, as well as in Dutch, French and German. But from the easy manner in which he could lay a language aside it is clear that what he sought was not literary effect. In his letter to his parents we find him after only a year forgetting his mother tongue with no symptoms of dismay. Later he apologizes to the Jesuit General for writing in English, since he has grown out of the habit of using Latin or French. Again, he asks in Chicago for somebody to preach in German, as he has lost what he had of that language. And he seems to have thrown them all overboard with the sense that he was lightening the ship. The fact is, that he wished for only one thing in order to be effective in America, the mastery of English, and he used the other languages only for their aid to him in this. And this he attained, through hard efforts and the help of God—a clear, virile, direct English which he used for the exact purpose he desired, to tell divine truth to people in a way they would not forget. Neither was he enamored of the dramatic quality of his sermons. He never stood back, as it were, to contemplate their artistic value. The only appreciations he gives us of his sermons are to be extracted from such stray phrases as 'preached three times today'; 'ten thousand Com-

munions'; 'my voice holds out well'; 'not feeling at all tired.'

The explanation of this is simply that Damen did not rest with preaching as his final aim. It was a most useful tool in his hands, and only as such he valued it. He had another idea back of this. He wished to reach, to appeal to, to convert, large masses of men. He did not think in terms of brilliant masterpieces, city churches, cultured audiences, distinguished personages. His imagination swept out and encircled whole regions at a flight. He visioned vast multitudes gathering for the Church and felt that he was one who must go out and gather them. It is the missionary ideal that held Damen and that explains everything about him, his excellences as well as his limitations. The literary preacher is one thing, the missionary preacher is another, or rather, is two things. And Damen was, above all, the missionary. Like Xavier, like Marquette, his ambition was to carry the faith to ever widening circles of men. Preaching was to him merely the sculptor's chisel to fashion his idea and to make it stand out clearcut to easy view, the instrument he played upon to enable men to catch and hold the melody. As we shall discover, he estimated his audience first and then fashioned his discourse. But his main thought was always a missionary thought. He was not ultimately thinking of how he would give out his discourse, but of how he would gather in his audience.

Our idea of Damen, therefore, would be very incomplete if we were to look on him merely as a preacher. He was much more than this. He was a missionary. He regarded preaching as the door that opened into the mission field, but the gathering in of great harvests of souls was always his dominant idea. When the time arrived to take up this work, Damen had gone through a preparation that made him perfectly apt for it. During these first ten years of his

priesthood, Providence had gradually maneuvered him into position. He had not been sent to preach, but had been put into contact with human life in all its stages from childhood to old age—children in the schools, young men in the sodality, families in the parish, the sacramental and spiritual duties within the church, wide experience derived from the confessional and the pulpit, visits to the sick and dying; conferences with the troubled and the scrupulous, instructions to converts, the administration of a parish with its inner details—all this experience he had absorbed and had ready at hand for instant use. He had studied a cross-section of Catholic life down to its last nerve. He had taught much, but in the process he had learned more.

Outside events, too, shaped his future. He had already begun to give missions here and there, near home, whenever parish arrangements would allow it. His sermons drew crowds everywhere he went, so that he became very well known not only in St. Louis but through Missouri. Among other places, his name had reached Carondelet, where Father O'Regan was head of the Theological Seminary. In 1854, Father O'Regan was appointed Bishop of Chicago. After consulting the needs of his diocese, he decided that one of the things that would help would be to have Father Damen come to Chicago and to conduct a series of missions there, along the lines of his work in St. Louis. Accordingly, in the summer of 1856, Father Damen, with three other Jesuit priests, Fathers Boudreaux, Masselis and Corbett, arrived in Chicago and gave three weeks of missions in the Cathedral of the Holy Name. To judge from the reports, nothing like it had ever been done in Chicago. Father Matthew Dillon, pastor of the Holy Name Church and President of the University of St. Mary's of the Lake, wrote of this mission in the St. Louis *Leader* as follows:

The spiritual retreat which our Right Reverend Bishop has provided for the Catholics of this city has just closed. For the last three weeks the exercises have been conducted by five Jesuit Fathers under the guidance of Father Damen. The fruits of their holy and successful labors are already manifest. Many Protestants have embraced the Catholic religion, and the Catholics, to be counted by thousands—many, very many of whom had neglected their spiritual interests—crowded the churches and confessionals. The zeal, the piety and labors of Father Damen and his associates, and his practical and persuasive eloquence, have won for these eminent servants of God the love and veneration of all our citizens, Protestant and Catholic. From four in the morning until after midnight, these zealous Fathers and the parochial clergymen have been occupied, yet all this was insufficient, such was the holy importunity of the people whom God moved to profit by their ministry.

It is understood that twelve thousand at least have received Communion. None of the churches could accommodate the multitude that crowded from all parts of the city. The cathedral, with its galleries newly put up, being found altogether too small, the mission was transferred to the large enclosure on the North Side, known as the church of the Holy Name, and here, as if nothing had been previously done, a new harvest is found already mature.

Years of spiritual indolence are atoned for and a new life, the life of grace, is begun by hundreds who for long years knew not how great a blessing this was. How consoling to the heart of the Right Reverend Bishop and to the missionaries must be this fruit of their labors, this fresh evidence of the vitality of the Catholic spirit, which it would seem neither time nor circumstances the most unfavorable to its culture can root out of the soul of the sincere believer!

Although some years must yet pass before he could give himself to the missions as he wished, yet, it was his first step on the path he had so long looked forward to. Its immediate result was to detach him from

St. Louis and to send him to Chicago to start what was to be the famous Holy Family parish.

This was a most timely mission for the diocese. A good deal of the friction and discontent that inevitably attend the beginnings of every big work was then running through the Chicago Catholics. This was made acute by the variety of nationalities that were settling in the city. Distrust, jealousies, suspicions, the little birds that gather to a cloud darkening the sun, were all part of the fever that hindered the growth of the infant church of Chicago. It was a real danger to the faith and at the time of the mission it had disturbed the attachment between Bishop and flock.

Father Damen caught the trouble on the opening day of the mission. As he and Father Boudreaux were accompanying the Bishop from the residence to the cathedral for the opening Mass of the mission, he observed that as the party passed through the crowds gathered about the church, not a hat was raised nor any token of reverence given to their Bishop beyond a stare of curiosity. During the Mass that followed, Father Damen opened the mission, and in the course of that first sermon spoke upon the reverence due their Bishop. He pleaded for a return of the congregation to their former simple obedience and affection. The result was happy and immediate. On the way back to the residence after Mass, the Bishop found the people kneeling down to receive his blessing as he passed.

Ten years after this incident, the entire Catholic population of Chicago turned out with banners and with music to welcome Bishop Foley to Chicago. Not many perhaps took time to think at that moment what ten years had done to improve the Catholic spirit of the city, now flooding with enthusiasm. But Father John Waldron, the pastor of St. John's, who had lived through those years, and was as close to its inner his-

tory as any priest of Chicago, was standing in a group of friends watching this procession passing by, and he summed up his reflections upon the change of Catholic spirit with the remark, 'Well, all this is due to Father Damen.'

CHAPTER VII

IN YOUNG CHICAGO

CHICAGO, in 1856, was like a young eagle struggling to fly. It had one wing extended and a talon lifted, but the other talon was stuck deep in the mud. When Damen came there, he must have felt it was a home-coming to the lowlands of Holland. There was water everywhere; Lake Michigan washed Chicago's shore line; the Chicago River wound through its interior; rain and snow came down and stayed where they fell, until evaporation took them off. The city was but a few feet above water level and flat as the palm of one's hand. Satisfactory drainage was impossible. In rainy weather the citizens staggered through the mud, a hundred thousand of them. City traffic, except in dry weather, was badly clogged, or altogether stopped. On either side of the streets, huge ditches were dug to carry away the water, but with no fall in the level it simply stayed there.

Ida Tarbell, in her life of Abraham Lincoln, gives us a description of Chicago's appearance in 1860, just a few years after Damen's first mission there.

It was on May 16 that the Republican Convention of 1860 formally opened at Chicago. The audacity of inviting a National Convention to meet there in the condition in which Chicago chanced to be at that time was purely Chicagoan. No other city would have risked it. In ten years Chicago had nearly quadrupled its population, and it was believed that the feat would be repeated in the coming decade. In the first flush of youthful energy and ambition the town had undertaken the colossal task of raising

itself bodily out of the grassy marsh, where it had been originally placed, to a level of twelve feet above Lake Michigan and of putting underneath a good solid foundation. When the invitation to the Convention was extended, half of the buildings in Chicago were on stilts; some of the streets had been raised to the new grade, others still lay in the mud; half of the sidewalks were poised high on piles, and half still were down on a level with the lake. A city with a conventional sense of decorum would not have cared to be seen in this demoralized condition, but Chicago perhaps conceived that it would but prove her courage and confidence to show the country what she was doing; and so she had the Convention come.

Fifteen years after this the city was still filling in. It grew so fast that the leveling could not keep up with it. Streets in many places bore the sarcastically humorous legend *No bottom,* hoisted on a long pole and stuck into the middle of a mud hole. Whenever a fire occurred in these districts in rainy weather, it was invariably a complete success, great lumber yards or grain elevators burning spectacularly in the middle distance, while the firemen stood aloof as spectators several blocks away, beside their engines sunk to the wheel tops in the middle of every street that led to the fire.

This problem of motion was the first great difficulty to be overcome in a city that was growing like a young giant. Already in 1856 the people were solving it. And Father Damen on his arrival found them in the present loop district engaged in the familiar Dutch Lowland occupation of poldering, that is, filling in the city to rescue it from the water. Between 1855 and 1860 the entire level of the business portion was raised some twelve feet. It was to be many years, however, before the poldering would reach Father Damen's parish on the west side.

This city of Chicago, sticky as flypaper underfoot and scattered over with hastily built wooden houses

that were not much more than shelters, nevertheless, 'had something.' It had location, and the eye alive to commercial opportunity was quick to observe it. Set at the foot of the Great Lakes, it had possible communication all the way through to the Atlantic. Its river gave it, not only one of the finest harbors in the world, but also a possible way into the Mississippi to the south, while as a railroad center it was a pivotal point to the four corners of the country. These advantages had been seen by travelers, and long before any of the large cities of the Middle West were founded the place was taken note of. 'As early as 1688,' Father Garraghan tells us in his *History of the Catholic Church of Chicago,* 'the name of the city had been written into the geography of the day, Franquelin's famous map of that year showing *Fort Chicagou* on the site of the future metropolis; and this, thirteen years before Cadillac founded Detroit, seventy-six before Laclede set up his trading post in St. Louis, and a hundred before Denham and Patterson platted the village that was to develop into Cincinnati.'

Marquette and Joliet saw the same thing. On the cross set as a memorial to Marquette's visit to Chicago in 1674, when he landed at what is now the foot of Damen Avenue and the Chicago River, is an inscription where we read: 'Joliet recommended it for its natural advantages as a place of first settlement and suggested a lake to the gulf waterway by cutting a canal through the portage west of here where begins the Chicago Drainage Ship Canal. This remarkable prophecy made two hundred and thirty-four years ago is now fulfilled.'

Father St. Cyr, the first pastor of Chicago, wrote in 1833 to Bishop Rosati in St. Louis: 'The situation of Chicago is the finest I have ever seen. . . . Everything proclaims that Chicago will one day become a great town and one of commercial importance.' And

twenty-five years after, Father Damen, in a letter to the General of the Jesuits in Rome, says: 'This town will become one of the largest in the United States.'

If explorers and missionaries could thus see at a glance the commercial possibilities of this spot, it is easy to imagine how traders, merchants, land prospectors, anyone directly interested in the business of making money, would grasp at its obvious advantages. And that is what happened. As soon as the tide of immigration reached the Middle West, a large percentage of it poured toward Chicago. The more alert, daring, energetic, reached it first and started the city off with a rush of vitality that struck the keynote of its progress and characterizes it to the present day. In 1840, there were five thousand inhabitants in Chicago. By 1870, it had more than three hundred thousand people. In thirty years, it had multiplied its population six hundred times. There is no record in history of a growth so rapid.

That is one of the reasons why the city was sunk in the mud. It spread so fast that it hadn't the leisure for looking pretty, or even for keeping neat. So many things had to be done, and done right away, that it couldn't get time to wash its face. Streets sprang up over night, and houses, people, business crowded along them helter skelter. They just named the streets and let it go at that. With a city almost down to the water level, it can readily be understood that these streets were a morass in wet weather, and in dry seasons foot-deep with Death Valley dust. They couldn't help it. Like soldiers driving for an objective, they simply must go ahead anyhow. So they plunged horses and wagons into the drifts of dust, or churned through the swamps of mud, survive or perish. Cattle and hogs, destined for the stockyards, wallowed and squealed and mooed along the streets, pursued by relentless horsemen, hallooing and whip-cracking; distracted cows ran danger-

ously over the sidewalks, unconsciously prefiguring the modern automobile; frightened mothers rushed out of doors to drag their children away from the mad stampeding. And nobody could do a thing about it, or see a present way out of it. Business had to go on. One had to move fast to live in Chicago. Its practical motto was the equivalent of, 'Devil take the hindmost.'

Naturally, the town attracted two classes of persons especially; those who were fascinated by the romance of speed and those who had the vision and the tenacity to see and to cling to opportunity. All others were submerged or eliminated. Thus the Chicago boom came to be an affair of not merely a few promoters and organizers who ballyhooed the population into an artificial activity that would wither when the turmoil and the shouting died. It was rather the natural and spontaneous spirit of the whole city, made up of the personal contributions of each person in it. This kept the boom going steadily and saved Chicago from the deflation that has been the death of a thousand towns in the United States. They knew the city had greatness within its reach and they were determined to develop it and share in it.

Merely to follow along in Chicago, it will be easily surmised, was something of a feat in those days. But to lead here called for an extra infusion of energy, clear-headedness and driving power. The city was in an effervescence; it was bursting with business. The inflow of settlers was so steady and rapid that houses could not be built fast enough. Patches of dwellings, like separate little towns, began to appear to the west, south, and north, their sites chosen apparently at random. The city limits spread enormously and in so detached a fashion that anything like civic plans for the orderly laying out of the town were impossible. There was a go-as-you-please atmosphere over everything that made

any kind of direction difficult. The temperament of the people had that 'I will' quality in it which later gave the city its slogan. But at that time it was not a civic 'I will,' but each individual took the slogan as his own particular property. This tendency left its mark on the social and the religious trend of the town as well as on its business. And the man who would gather together and guide any group of people with these ideals and growing habits had no idle moments on his hands.

This whole situation need not be considered at all strange. It is the inevitable penalty of too much speed. It is easier to assemble the parts of a machine than to fit them together; easier to gather a crowd than to direct it. And Chicago was not a crowd, it was a multitude, coming on like a swiftly rising tide. Anyone with an elementary knowledge of human nature could predict that clash and friction would be a part of its early history.

This showed among the Catholics of Chicago, in spite of the well-known power of Catholic organization. To begin with, many of the Catholics who came to the city did not know their religion well. Twenty years before this time, Father St. Cyr, writing to Bishop Rosati, said, 'While the number of Catholics is large, almost all of them are entirely without knowledge of their religion.' They went to Mass regularly, and generally they respected their priests, but beyond that they were unacquainted with the detailed needs of the Church as an organization. The result was that when things were done which were perfectly in accord with normal Church rules, but strange to them at the time, they showed a tendency in spots to fall back on their 'I will' privilege, and to go their own way in the matter. This tendency was still in evidence at the time of Damen's first mission in Chicago, in 1856, as the incident we have related proves.

Besides this, there were not nearly enough priests to cope with the increasing work. Those on the ground had to do the best they could, omitting a great part of the individual attention which the Church aims to give her children. The consequence was that a considerable number of souls merely drifted with the tide, in great danger of losing their faith altogether.

Finally the difficulty of nationalities was felt like a cinder in the eye. A melting pot, one would judge, isn't such a pleasant place to toss about in, and the problem of making over many newcomers from various shores into Americans and welding them into harmoniously spiritual co-operation as Catholics, could not be described as easy of solution. The man who would meet this situation, understand and conquer it, must have a strong faith and determination, a keen business sense, fine tact, a real affection for the people he wished to win, physical strength for hard and constant work, patience to see things through and a personality with a power of strong appeal—a combination of the practical and the visionary, a dreamer of dreams as well as a doer of deeds, a prophet, in a sense, as well as a missionary.

After Damen's mission in Chicago, Bishop O'Regan judged that this was the man to meet these requisites and he took steps at once to have Damen join the forces already at work in his diocese. While the Jesuit Fathers were still giving their first mission in the city, he had urged them to consider a permanent residence in Chicago and offered them a location anywhere they might choose. Father Damen wrote the Bishop's wish to his Provincial and received in return the answer to go ahead, do what he could, and his judgment in the matter would be sanctioned. Before he returned to St. Louis, he took a survey of Chicago real estate. There was plenty of it to look at, almost nothing else, in fact, in the districts he leaned toward as the site of a pros-

pective parish. He was not well acquainted with local real estate conditions, but his natural business sense and his practical judgment rose to the surface and in the short time that he had for inquiry he formed a sound estimate of where he was likely to do the most good. Shortly after his return to St. Louis, Father Damen received the following letter from the Bishop:

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, Sept. 15, 1856.

TO REVEREND FATHER DAMEN, S.J.,
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

Dear Father Damen:

I have just now written to Father Provincial and I want you to assist me with him that he may grant a request of establishing a House in Chicago. You know its necessity and the prospects before it and hence I have referred to you as one who can give to the Provincial and others all the requisite information on this subject. May I beg of you to do so? You could not co-operate in a holier work. You would be a most efficient instrument to hold up religion in this city and diocese. Land can be had quite near to the locality you wish for, but in a still better place, at a fair price and in large quantities. In one place, as much as six acres can be had. By buying all this, you would, in one year, have two entirely free. The increased value caused by your establishment would effect this. This is a positive fact.

I would also request of you not to correspond *on this matter* with any one whatever in Chicago, except myself, not even with those who, in other respects, would be found most trustworthy. Already Catholics whom you regard much are actually speculating on the subject and if they knew you or I had a preference for a particular place, they would soon have it bought up. You will write soon.

I am sorry that I did not merit your thanks better while you were in Chicago. I can never sufficiently express my esteem for you and your worthy Fathers.

I would have written sooner to you and to Father Provincial, but I wished to know more about the land.

With kindest regards for Father De Smet and the earnest wish of seeing you soon permanently at work in Chicago, where you are most ardently expected, I am, reverend dear Father Damen,

Very truly yours,

ANTHONY,
Bishop of Chicago and
Administrator of Quincy.

This letter reveals the cordial good feeling that existed between Bishop O'Regan and Father Damen, and the impression the Jesuit mission had made upon not only the Bishop but upon the Catholics of the city. After the sample of his work they had witnessed, they went after him, in characteristic fashion, to 'sign him up' with Chicago for life. And they succeeded.

In St. Louis, Father Damen was considering seriously the financial side of the Chicago proposition. He had no money himself, and any he could procure had to come either from a loan or a donation. He seemed to think that Bishop O'Regan might help him, but the following from the Bishop disillusioned him of that idea:

As to resources which it would appear you suppose me to have, I have none such, as I think you must know. You are always aware how much we are in debt, and how much must be expected before we can derive any revenue from our churches. We have to erect a hospital, two asylums, a House of Refuge and a House of Mercy; we must build school houses, priests' houses, buy lots for churches and build churches. I must also at once provide a cemetery, which will cost at least $32,000, without any prospect of revenue in my lifetime. All these wants are known to you, and my inability to supply them, or even a small portion of them. How then, very dear Father, can you talk of my leaving property to my successor? If your Society comes here, I will leave them wealth, a spiritual wealth, practiced by you, and I hope by myself.

There was no prospect of direct financial support from Chicago. But Father Damen read the future of the city too well to allow this to be an obstacle. Through his Superior, he borrowed enough money to acquire a site, and early in 1857 returned to Chicago to locate one.

There was some difference of opinion between Bishop O'Regan and Father Damen regarding the choice of the new site, though the Bishop allowed him freedom in the matter. Father Damen steadily looked away from what are called 'desirable localities' toward any spot where he could reach more souls, and especially the poor. Years before, he had written: 'How many more souls might I not have gained for God had I devoted my time amongst the poor instead of the rich. Have I not had experience enough to prove that my spiritual functions to improve the rich are well-nigh lost, whereas my endeavors for the poor are almost always productive of much fruit?'

Back of all the prospecting and building that Damen was launching into, always remained fast the guiding idea of the missionary, 'Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart.'

The location that Damen finally decided upon was chosen largely for religious reasons. It was a place where he had Catholics to work for. This appears in the following letter to Father Druyts, his Superior in St. Louis:

The answer from Philadelphia has come about the Bull's Head property. They will sell at $600 a lot, which would make a total of $24,600 for the 44 lots. The acre which is in litigation cannot be settled yet. With this acre included, there would be 52 lots, and this would make a total of $31,400. Of this, $2,500 would be paid by two Protestant gentlemen toward the improvement. I went out this afternoon and made inquiries about the number

of Catholic families in the neighborhood and I could not find a dozen around the place. I therefore concluded that the place should be rejected as one that would not pay for the sacrifices we have to make. Should your reverence think differently, telegraph—'Buy the Bull's Head.' Bishop still continues recommending this place and says that we will regret it; but I cannot believe that, informed as I am at present about the few Catholics in that vicinity. Moreover, here we would have to put up $10,000 improvements the first year; that is part of the bargain.[1]

Now I have accepted the Southwest Side, three acres at $5,500 an acre, that is thirty-two lots. Here we will have a large Catholic population at once, sufficient to fill a large church. We can put up a frame church, which will answer the purpose till all the land is paid off. Then it will answer for a school, and the rest of the land, which we can sell, will help us to build the college and the new church. In my opinion it is decidedly the only place we can take here.

This letter is a good specimen of Damen's correspondence. In fact, nearly all his letters that we have concern business matters, and even these reveal the pressure of emergency in every case. They are written on paper of every size, shape and color. There are yellow letters, blue letters, gray letters. Whatever blank sheet lay nearest at hand was satisfactory. With no overture at all he plunges into the theme, states it clearly and briefly and is done. We surmise that Damen looked on letter-writing as a necessary evil. But in spite of their condensation, they reveal his character. There is an honesty about them, a directness that sometimes verges on bluntness, a sincerity that doesn't know how to beat about the bush, with every now and then a note of heartiness and thankfulness and genuine piety that

[1] The Bull's Head was a tavern at the southeast corner of Madison Street and Ogden Avenue, where the Washingtonian Home stood in later years. It was built in 1848 by Matthew Laflin and owed its name to the neighboring cattleyards, the first to be opened in Chicago.

show him as anything but the hard business man. We can see a good deal of Damen's character in this short letter. The two mistakes he makes in computing expenses, is something exceptional with him. He made very few of these in business matters.

In other ways the letter is entirely Damenesque. He could plan rapidly and yet safely. It is remarkable how he forecasts so quickly just what he is going to do. This brief, but complete outline of future building—the land, the temporary church, a school, a college, a second, permanent church—all this looked like a dream to others at the time. Yet in a dozen years, he had it all finished. He had judged perfectly the pace Chicago was striking, and he planned on a scale to keep up with it. His estimating power was unusually keen. Another quality of Damen appears here that characterized him throughout, namely, his power of sturdy decision when decision was left to him, as well as his care to suspend action when he did not have the final word. Thus, Bishop O'Regan had given him freedom of choice of his location and after consideration he had decided against a suggestion of the Bishop. In the matter of spending money for the place, however, he was not declared free by his Provincial, who would ultimately be responsible for the debt. So Damen holds himself ready to drop or change his plan at a word from headquarters.

No difficulties were raised, however. The Bishop consented to his location, the Provincial to his investment and Damen was free to begin. The place he chose for the parish buildings lay a block west of the intersection of what was then known as Twelfth Street and Hoosier Avenue, now Roosevelt Road and Blue Island Avenue. And the parish territory was the fifty square miles spreading around that center; in other words, nearly the whole west and southwest side of Chicago.

A curious fact is that neither Bishop O'Regan nor

Father Damen were aware that they were incorporating into the parish the site of Father Marquette's little church of almost two centuries before. On the twelfth of December, 1674, Marquette had built his cabin at what is now the junction of Damen Avenue and the Drainage Canal. There for several months he celebrated Mass daily and administered the sacraments to some stray Indians and to his French companions. Marquette was thus, informally, the first pastor of the district that, two hundred years later, Damen fell heir to as the first officially appointed pastor of the Holy Family Church.

CHAPTER VIII

A PARISH ON THE PRAIRIE

A VAST expanse of prairie, stretching west and south as far as the eye could reach; in summer rippled with wild grasses, in winter piled with drifts of snow, in spring and autumn sodden with rains slowly seeping into the earth; scattered irregularly here and there, singly or huddled in small groups, gaunt wooden houses standing forlorn; thin outlines of roads forming between strategic points, winding every way through deep dust or heavy mud; a flat, uninteresting, and to the chance observer, a totally unprofitable terrain where one might temporarily lodge under pressure, but which none would consider as a permanent dwelling place—this was Father Damen's choice of ground for the new parish, and here he was already planning to build what would be at its completion the third largest church in America.

It did seem an impossible proposition. A wise conservative would call it, at best, a mere gamble on the future. Where were the people? Only one square mile of the fifty had any Catholics and they were but a handful. Where was the money? He had a few borrowed thousands for the land, it is true, but where were the buildings to come from and where the necessary revenue for all the overhead expense? Even in prosperous times these questions would pose the hardiest investor, but in this very year of 1857, the great panic that swept across the country was in full gallop. Money went burrowing underground; business stopped dead; the unemployed were wandering all over the country

looking for any kind of work; restlessness came over everybody, with a tendency to scatter rather than to settle; discontent was spreading fast. The common phrase of the day was 'very hard times.' Men who held any money at all gripped it still tighter, and men who hadn't, reached hungrily out to get it. The idea of anybody giving money away for any purpose whatever seemed preposterous. And there was Damen, already in debt, standing away off in the middle of a prairie, holding out his hands and expecting people to come and put money into them. It looked foolish.

But Damen wasn't a bit foolish. He had resources which neither Bishop O'Regan nor his superiors in St. Louis suspected. All his life heretofore he had acted under orders. Even as pastor of St. Francis Xavier's Church in St. Louis he had followed along traditional lines. Now he was thrown upon his own initiative, facing an objective that was, apparently, hopeless of attainment. He had to give a local habitation and a name to a parish, almost out of airy nothing. A few straggling houses on a prairie, a scattered handful of people having all they could do to earn but a living, debt hanging over his head and a panic eating the country—these were the materials to be somehow metamorphosed into a great church, a high school and college, a group of Catholic grade schools, a population thickly crowding the west side of Chicago. He rose to the occasion and followed through without ever taking a backward step. We have observed of the traditional Hollander, that when hard pressed he will suddenly drop his cloak of stolidity and wave the sword of romance. And no one of his countrymen was ever more typical of this trait of the Hollander than Damen. From this time on, the *Luctor et Emergo* slogan of the Dutch could be used to describe Damen individually. Here was the turning point of his life. Whatever of diffidence, hesitation, timidity he had about him fell away from him,

and a romantic aggressiveness possessed their place. Romance did not overbalance him, however. His unusual, practical business instinct enabled him always to keep his feet. He moved continuously and swiftly but never lost his sense of direction. Imagination never led him on any blind hurryings after will-o'-the-wisps. Whatever mistakes he made in his work were merely technical ones. There were no wrecks on his main lines.

Romance, therefore, with Damen, had nothing in it of sentimentality, no plaintive pondering upon the mystery of the past. He wasted no time in brooding over days that were no more, nor lost himself in vague dreams of cloud-capped palaces in the future. He was a priest alone on a prairie, and his romance was the prosaic labor of bringing scattered sheep together into a fold. In this business he made no movement at haphazard, or by guesswork. The site he chose was the outcome of his own shrewd observation. He had rejected the spot suggested by the Bishop only after thorough study of the Catholic situation in Chicago. For his new location he had gone out and mingled among the few people settled about, and his judgment was that here was the type he was looking for as the solid foundation stones for his parish. Most of them were Irish, and all of them, whatever their other defects and handicaps, had strong religious faith. They were thinking, too, of providing for their children the education that they had been denied themselves. Damen possessed the gift of estimating character in the group as well as in the individual. He saw at once that this combination of faith and the love of learning was bound to evolve into a fruitful and tenacious Catholicity and immediately he picked this as his starting point. Old residents of Chicago wondered at his decision, feared he was making a mistake, foreboded pessimistically, but Damen stood by his first intuition. The event proved him to be correct.

In fact, it was his intimate contact with the little group that revealed to Damen the immense possibilities latent in these people and gave the first impulse to the spread of his original plan. They were enthusiastic, generous, attached to the priest. It is the spirit that makes for growth—*crescit eundo*. Damen proved that it is the wise priest who learns from his people. Unconsciously they were outlining for him the future of their parish. Damen realized that the outlines were spacious, that they were just the people to respond to his ideals. He took the cue and set himself to develop a great tree from the tiny mustard seed.

In March of 1857 the site of the new parish had been chosen. In May of the following year, Father Damen, in company with Father Charles Truyens, arrived in Chicago from St. Louis to begin the work definitely. He carried with him a memorandum of instructions from his superior upon which he had written, 'Remember why we go to Chicago, viz., A M D G.—for the greater glory of God, the good of religion, the good of souls. Let us then have the best of intentions and often renew them.'

The building and organization of a parish has sapped the vitality of many an American priest. Apart from the work of choosing a site, of the letting of contracts and of supervising the actual construction, the crux of the enterprise is the providing of money. Our churches are not endowed. Seldom does any wealthy man build a church, or even a notable part of it, for a parish. It is the small-income personnel that have built the churches of America, and while this makes the pastor proud of his people, it places a heavy burden upon him. He must make large payments in lump sums and these he has to gather together dollar by dollar. He cannot dip the bucket into the well and draw it up filled. For him there is no well. His only resource is to put the bucket out of doors and watch it till it fills, drop by drop. And in

order to get the drops he must also create the rain. In other words he has to impress on the people the need he has for meeting the parish bills. He has to do that very uncongenial and distasteful thing to him, 'talk money.'

Considering all the priest's responsibilities, it is rather a wonder that the whole building process doesn't get on his nerves much oftener than actually happens. The essential work of a priest isn't building at all. It is the spiritual care of his parish, the individual attention that each of his flock requires. Theoretically, that is the only thing he was trained and ordained for and, living up to that calling, his days and nights are full. Real estate, architecture, finance, are all added burdens. They are necessary preliminaries to his work, it is true, and for that reason he does not shirk them. But he always feels that they are things to be got out of the way before he can settle down to his special duties. They are a clog to his ideals, a drag on his priestly activities. Building plans, bills and brick-piles wall in his spiritual horizon. Nevertheless, he tries to do both together. It often exhausts him and it always bothers him. He supports the entire money responsibility, which the individual parishioner is but vaguely conscious of. And yet the pastor is building for the parish and not for himself. Not an inch of it can he will away at his death.

This effort to get the parish rapidly established for spiritual work, under financial conditions that keep him asking large numbers of people for small contributions, is what puts the strain on the priest and wears him out. It seems harsh to criticize any priest working under such a handicap.

It was precisely such a situation that Father Damen faced at his start in Chicago. In his case we should hardly call it a situation. It was more like an extremity. If the average priest nowadays has to face difficulties

more than sufficient, he has at least something to begin with. His people are more numerous; they are grouped in definite territory; they have building traditions back of them; they have had usually some Catholic training; they have some money. Damen had not any of these resources. His was a tiny flock scattered over fifty square miles, that had never a chance for accurate Catholic training, had never built a church or school, had no money and no near prospect of getting any. The panic had dried finances at their source. There was no money visible anywhere.

However, Damen had studied his little army and had made a close estimate of their fighting qualities. They had not been unacquainted with trouble. At home, in Ireland, they had endured the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune until they had been driven across the world. All the advantages of leisure, of culture had been systematically cut off from them. Every material opportunity was strangled by one cruel device after another. Ownership and initiative were impossible. When famine visited them, they were deliberately neglected, until a million of them died. The survivors began to leave in large numbers, naturally choosing America, where they could hope to get a foothold. They arrived here apparently completely destitute, but they brought more with them than they knew. They brought the genuine root of all culture and progress, the faith, which the ax of persecution had failed to reach. This vital antidote to decay they had never lost, and as soon as they were given the chance to lead normal human lives, it showed its power. Damen saw all this clearly and, though his band was small, he trusted its aggressive fighting strength. Tied hand and foot, they had won their way to freedom. What could they not achieve now that they had at least a clear road ahead of them! We can see from Damen's letters that

this was the mainspring of his confidence, the spirit of faith that he felt surging around him. A great fighter himself, he had great fighters with him. Together, he believed they would dare any situation, barehanded.

The bare hands in this instance meant empty pockets. As far as money was concerned, the parish was in a vacuum. But Damen's vision of the big church, schools and college would not down. With his gallant light brigade back of him he felt that he could do it. And so, without a single backward glance, they galloped together straight into the Valley of Debt to create the romance of the Holy Family parish and, incidentally, to build up half a great city.

The story of this romance, however, would hardly compete in color or dramatic movement with the stories of Walter Scott. The chivalric setting of tourney and of battlefield must be dimmed by the drab and prosaic clash of bills payable versus cash. Lance and armor must be set aside for lumber and nails, the moated castle for the wooden structure that is called a church, but sprawls like a warehouse. Yet we must affirm, as we look on at this latter-day contest, that the age of chivalry is far from dead. From the merely scenic point of view, everything is missing here. But the very absence of the spectacular heightens the effect. The little band of spiritual crusaders, altogether unconscious of anything extraordinary in their action, were nevertheless setting out to fight for the Holy Land. And their objective was to create it in their midst. They were not solicitous of what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewith they should be clothed. They sought first the kingdom of God, and their faith told them that whatever they needed would be added to them.

Damen went ahead, always more confident, vigorous, alert, efficient. Wherever he moved, his band followed.

The letters he wrote during this early period of storm and stress would be amusing if it were not that they reveal him in such desperate straits. Nothing can be so pestiferously wearing as a swarm of debts, each with its separate sting. Like a plague of locusts, they desolate the soul and leave it a waste. Damen had hardly started his campaign when his distress becomes evident. Checks, interest, creditors, rebates, payments, bank accounts, bills, revenues, contracts, real estate, panic, loans, mortgages, all these, intermingled with stone, bricks, lumber, windows, roofs, floors, go flying through his letters like débris in a tornado. One wonders where he ever got time even to say his prayers. Yet he keeps the boat nosing into the waves, steadily bailing with one hand and paddling with the other. There is never the least sign of quitting.

In March, 1857, Damen had chosen the site for his church. On July twelfth the little wooden building was solemnly blessed by Bishop Duggan. Immediately it proved too small. The people began to come to him in such crowds that he had to enlarge the church. These comparatively light additional debts staggered his finances. In October, he writes to the Provincial:

> Swift, you are aware, has suspended business. Most people say that he is broke.
>
> Almost all the Catholics who deposited with him have lost considerably by him. This works against us. Two days before he closed, I drew out $1,000 and left with him $207. However I will get it all. The man who delivers stone to our building has to pay him $2,800 and he has taken my check on Swift, to which Swift agreed, so that I lose only the interest. We find it next to impossible to collect money at present. The people are still afraid in consequence of the many failures all over the country. Still, up to this time, Chicago has kept up better than St. Louis, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. There have been less failures here than elsewhere.

A letter from Father De Smet, written in this same month, gives a bird's-eye view of the financial atmosphere in the United States at that time.

The money crisis in the United States [he writes from St. Louis] is awful. The banks of New York started the ball and it has rolled with lightning speed all over the Union. From every quarter it is now rolled back to the great metropolis of the east, and daily we hear of nothing but failures of banks and of commercial houses. In St. Louis six banks have suspended and many prominent commercial houses have failed.

Damen's dream of the large Gothic church persisted, however, and he pursued it with such vigor that in a few months he had subscriptions to the amount of fifty thousand dollars. 'I get along pretty well,' he wrote to the Provincial, 'and people are astonished that I can get money at all.'

Meantime, after finishing the temporary church, he turned his attention to providing a Catholic school for the children of the parish. He started by adding two wings to the wooden church. These were used as classrooms during the week, and on Sundays were opened for the church overflow, which had already made his first building too small. One of the wings was used as a classroom for the girls, the other for the boys. He employed Catholic lay teachers to begin with, as then there was no opportunity to secure Religious.

The idea of the Catholic school moving hand in hand with the Church does not strike us today as being anything unusual. It is now the normal status in all parishes that can support a school. But then it was by no means common. Partly by reason of poverty, partly because the public schools were thought sufficient, not many parishes had schools. The idea that schools without any religion meant ultimately the decay of all religion had not penetrated the average Catholic mind with sufficient force to make Catholics take the practical step

of defending the faith at that danger point. Damen was among the first to see what a school system without religion must come to, and he provided against the danger right from the beginning. We shall see his schools grow until they become the most complete system of any parish schools in the world.

CHAPTER IX

BUILDING THE CHURCH

THE permanent church that Damen now undertook to build was a structure in heavy Gothic, one hundred and eighty-six feet in length, one hundred and twenty-five in width, with a nave sixty-one feet in height. It was to be the third largest church in America at the time. It was to stand in the middle of the prairie. I remember old-timers in Chicago telling how they came to visit the church from the south side, crossing the river at Canal and Eighteenth Streets and then taking a short cut over the prairie, a distance of a mile and a half. To attempt this church here and now looked like an impractical, not to say foolhardy, undertaking, a clear case of overbuilding. Indeed, Damen was told so, even by members of his own Community. In one of his letters he mentions to the Provincial that he has just been warned by one of his fellow Jesuits that there was 'no sense in building a church of that size, miles from anywhere.'

As for money, it was a minus quantity. He began on borrowed money and he had to depend on collections to carry on. And collections in those days did not mean subscriptions. Wages were low, work was scarce, money dear, the panic was still rampant. It all meant that Damen had to gather his funds bit by bit, like a man trying to fill a huge reservoir, a thimbleful at a time. Nevertheless he persisted in his conviction, stood by his guns and went at it, often with the sense, no doubt, that he was back in Holland keeping out the sea by the old Dutch method of poldering.

His vision turned out to be the true one. The higher the church went the more people crowded into the territory, built their homes and turned in to co-operate with their pastor. Damen kept pace with both the people and the work. He made the personal acquaintance of each family as it came into the parish and he never forgot any of them. He had the valuable gift of being able to remember the names, faces and circumstances of every person he met. Besides, he had quick intuition to judge particular fitness for the various kinds of work he needed help in and he never was in the least shy in asking anybody to step forward and lend a hand. He had a way with him that brought everybody into the company and made them feel glad to be there. The result was that through all the hard times of scraping money together, a swing and a heartiness went along with it that created a strong family feeling in the Holy Family parish. They all caught the idea that they were banded together for a cause and the rallying point was their new church.

With this spirit of cheerful unity possessing the parish, Damen proceeded to organize what was probably the first 'drive' on a large scale for any church in Chicago. He called for help in his collecting and a large number of men offered their services. They were divided into 'Regulars' and 'Rovers,' the former to cover the seventeen districts into which Damen had divided the parish and the latter to go anywhere and gather from any field they could legitimately enter. This idea of the Rovers would not get very far in the present organized system of Chicago churches, where each parish is rightfully expected to finance itself within its own limits. But seventy-five years ago conditions were different. Parish limits were not so definite; Chicago was a small city and there was a more general spirit of 'hands across the town' than we can have nowadays. People knew each other better and a

difficulty in one place could win the interest of all the others, both priests and people.

Damen kept for himself the main task of providing funds for the church structure. To his 'Volunteers,' as they were called, was assigned the series of special drives. First a drive for the stained-glass windows, then for the bell, the altars, the school. All contributions were welcome, down to the widow's mite, and necessarily there was a preponderance of these.

The parish was a busy hum of collecting, building, praying. For the spiritual life of the people grew with the church.

'The old west side, I love it!' said one of the oldest surviving parishioners recently. 'Those were the happy days, when everyone knew everybody else and we got our great thrill out of building churches and schools. We didn't have much money then, but every bit we could spare we gave. Our money went out, but when we saw the buildings coming in one after another and our people and children filling them, we felt that we got more than we gave.'

Father Damen was all over the parish, at first on foot, but afterward, when he found it impossible to cover the fifty square miles of his colony in such slow fashion, he got a horse and buggy, which was high speed in those Chicago days. Even then, however, his traveling was no sinecure. It was never a letting out at full speed and clattering down a boulevard, Derby fashion. The deep Chicago streets, deep in mud or deep in dust, forbade it. The buggy often sank to its hubs in the mire; or climbed and bumped over roads that often looked like a succession of shell-holes; or tilted dangerously at the edge of formidable water-filled ditches that flanked the streets on either side. Driving was not an entertainment; it was an adventure. A good driver had to be something of an acrobat. The buggy seat swung about like a trapeze. But, like

the Fairy in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, though somewhat heavier, Damen did wander everywhere, meeting and greeting everyone on the way, and missing no chance, financial or spiritual, of helping the church and the parish.

He was easy to meet. There was a simple, direct, whole-hearted affability in his manner and address that put young and old at once on familiar terms with him. Dignity, but no pomp. Amid the thousand big and little things he had to do, he never showed signs of hurry or fret. His inner troubles and worries stayed there. They never got to the surface. No matter how debts hung over him and bills pressed for payment, he constantly gave the impression of a serene reserve strength that could ride over everything. He seemed always to be at his best. This poise inspired confidence into his people. Anything that he said ought to be done, they were sure it could be done and they were the ones who would do it. And with the impetus derived from Damen's spirit, this remarkable people carried through a program of building which we believe is unique among Catholic parishes the world over. Within less than twenty years they built and paid for two churches, the Holy Family and the Sacred Heart churches, with a parish residence for each, eight grade schools, holding six thousand children, a convent high school for girls, a large sodality hall, a home for working girls, and gave strong support to a high school and a college for boys. They realized Father Damen's vision to the last detail. Sixteen buildings in twenty years, done by people who worked every day for their living! If there is anywhere in the Church a finer example of practical and aggressive faith, we have not heard of it.

The center of this great system was the Holy Family church, which Damen was now beginning. He knew that out of this church would derive the power which

would enable his people to do the rest. He focused all his energies here, and he needed every ounce he had. Though none of the parish suspected it, most of the time he was only one step ahead of the bill collector. The people's donations were surprisingly large for the time and circumstances, but the expenses were even more surprising. Bazaars, entertainments, festivals, he tried them all, but the waters kept rising still. He raffled his horse and buggy and took to walking, but the ghost of debt walked right on his heels. At last he was driven to appeal outside for help. Some of his old St. Louis friends had made him gifts of property. This he kept in the very toe of the stocking as his last reserve. He was cutting his anchor when he let go of these. But he came to it finally. He writes to Father Druyts, the Provincial in St. Louis:

The house is getting ready for plastering and no money yet. It is too bad.

There is no money in Chicago. I regret I signed the contract; but it is too late now. We have to go on, and I think it providential that we signed the contract so thoughtlessly, for never could we build the church so low as we get it for; we must only exert ourselves and rely on Providence. It will be necessary to sell the lot of Mrs. Hunt and borrow some money, or sell Jane Graham's property; I will have money enough till the end of July, but then I must necessarily get some. I have borrowed a thousand dollars here at ten per cent per annum, payable five years from date, on the property which has been given to me here. Last Monday week we had Confirmation in our church. Two hundred and fifty persons were confirmed. We had about one thousand Communions in the morning, or perhaps more. Our congregation is really doing wonders; it fills us with consolation.

This letter reveals how Damen's mind was being buffeted about. In one sentence he regrets he signed the contract, and in the next he thinks it providential that he signed it. Borrowing and selling, debts a month to

run and five years to run, it is clear that he was here desperately reaching about in all directions for a way of escape. It is not surprising that he remarks in another letter, 'I am so extremely busy that I hardly know what to do first.' But he leans at last on the consoling work he sees going on about him in spiritual things and ends on a note of courage.

A little later, on June 16, 1858, he writes again:

Please send me the remainder of the money of the festival as soon as possible, for I have to make a great many payments. If you cannot get more than $1,200 for Mrs. Hunt's lot, it is better to sell it for that, because I will be awfully pushed for money; but we just trust in Divine Providence. We have prayed so much, and as it is for God's greater glory, I feel confident God will help us. We have just opened our free schools. We have already three hundred children and they are pouring in fast.

Again, on July 19, 1858:

Now, dear Father, try to act cleverly for Chicago. Give me $6,000 for Jane Graham's property and I will never ask you again for a cent, for Chicago. Had I $6,000 I could make all payments and put the roof on the church. . . . Had not times turned out as they have done, I would have plenty of money to meet all the obligations. But no one could have foreseen these difficulties.

As his distress increased and he saw no hope of getting help near home, he turns at last to the General. After giving an account of the work already done and the rapidity and volume of its increase, he continues:

Now, Very Reverend dear Father General, my object in writing to you is not only to give your Paternity an account of what has been done here, but also to beg, nay, to implore your Reverence to assist us in the building of our church. Had I seven thousand dollars, I could put

the roof on the church this year and get along without any trouble. Do, then, my Very Reverend dear Father General, do, for God's sake, for the good of souls and the glory of God, do help us to build this church which will be an honor to religion and a means most efficacious to promote the glory of God and the good of souls.

Probably by writing to the Propagation of the Faith you might help us, or perhaps you might effect a loan for us at moderate interest. There is here sufficient means to pay off the capital and interest by degrees. For as I have said already the real estate, worth twenty thousand dollars, could at any time pay this debt which your Reverence might contract for us. I will be most prompt in paying either the interest or the capital which your Reverence may be pleased to send us, should it not be a donation to the church.

If times had not become so bad as they are here now, I would have no occasion to beg your Reverence for anything. But times have turned in such a manner that there is no money to be had at any reasonable interest. Had I foreseen the difficulty of money matters I would not have signed any contracts, but things then looked prosperous. Father Provincial cannot help me, for he has his own difficulties, nor is he involved by my doings. No one is involved but myself and I hope the Society will make some exertions to help me out. In truth, seven thousand dollars (the amount required to put the roof on the church to preserve the walls from being injured by the weather) is a safe debt when there is thrice that amount of land to pay for it.

Please, then, Very Reverend dear Father, use your influence in our behalf. Could I stop the work I would do so, but the contracts have been signed and there is no possibility of retracting.

In our Community everything goes on very regularly and harmoniously. The rules are pretty well observed. We are united and live in great peace and fraternal charity. This residence consists of three Fathers, one Brother and a postulant.

The revenues of our present wooden church amount to over five thousand dollars yearly. One thousand is suffi-

cient to support us and pay our expenses. The rest is entirely devoted to the building of the new church.

Father Beckx wrote in reply, sympathizing with Damen's difficulties, but saying that it was impossible for him to lend any money to Damen, as he had none.

Six months later we find the battle still going on. On April 15, 1859, Father Damen writes to the Provincial:

Times in Chicago are very bad; no money among the people. I have paid off all our debts which were due at this time, and have $400 over for the July payment. I hope to get money for that payment, but the Lord only knows how I shall get ready for the other payments, for there is no prospect of times getting better till we have a better crop.

Five weeks later, May 24, 1859:

I am working day and night in order to pay off the $5,000 which is to be paid here this summer, and you know well enough that this is no trifle in these hard times. We think it better to make a sacrifice and have the church finished and do more good and secure a larger revenue than to leave the church unfinished. I have already bought 22,000 feet of lumber and paid for it, because lumber is rising in price. The architect is preparing things and in a few days I will give out the contract for plastering; for we have no time to lose if we wish to have it done before the cold weather sets in.

Our congregation is doing wonders. We have the exercises of the month of May at eight o'clock in the morning and the church is full. We have them again at 7:30 at night for those who cannot come in the morning and the church and schoolrooms are overflowing. On Sundays hundreds of people are obliged to go away, not being able to get into the church or schools.

During May he writes again:

I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have paid the July payment of $1,690.72 to the stone company; by pay-

ing it now, I get $23.74 discount, that is, one per cent a month. The floor of the church has been raised. In a week hence they take out of the wall the cracks under the transept windows. When will Brother Hutton be here? We want him badly.

Please let me know whether you will accept the Jane Graham property for $7,000, because then I can give out the contract for the plastering. Do say yes, for the love of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

These letters show us that Father Damen not only gathered the money for his building but attended to all the details of payment and construction. He was treasurer, accountant, let the contracts and supervised the construction. His ability in matters of business was distinctly more than ordinary. It is plain too, that he was careful of expenditures and scrupulous about paying his debts to the penny. He kept always looking ahead, closely estimating just how far he could go with his visible resources, and daring to go to the very limit of those resources. The accuracy of his business judgment invariably enabled him to skirt the danger edge and come out on solid ground. More than one of the men who dealt with him declared that he was the best business man they had ever met. His decisions were rapid, final and nearly always correct.

I think your charges too high [he writes to an architect bidder]. I can have very good architects in Chicago for one half of what you charge. I therefore give you notice not to do anything more to the plans or specifications till you receive other instructions either from myself or from Father Druyts.

Occasionally a piece of poor work would slip past his watchful eye, but upon detection, he immediately took decisive remedies.

Please send for X. and tell him to come and repair the roof. It is truly a bad job. Several slates have been blown off, because some of them have but one nail, and others

nails without heads. The lead also has been partly blown off, because it was not properly fastened to the roof. The gutters have been cut through by the slate which was blown off. To prevent the gutters being cut more, we have been obliged to lay boards in the gutters. I will not pay him, nor give him any notes, till things are satisfactorily settled here, and till he has satisfied his creditors here.

As a rule, however, the work done for Father Damen was well done, because he had the business intuition of choosing capable workmen, not easy to find seventy-five years ago in Chicago. Whenever he discovered one who suited him, he kept persistently after him to enroll him among his workers. In one of the above letters, we read his mention of Brother Hutton. It is only one of many similar requests made in letter after letter, all in the same brief, quiet, almost identical phrases, showing that he was still doggedly on the trail. Brother Heilers was another he kept asking the Provincial for in the same fashion. With these two men helping him on the church, he would have a skillful carpenter in the one and a trained mechanic, architect and builder in the other. He got both of them, and between them they directed all the early construction work of the parish.

One day as he was going about the parish, he observed two men loading a delivery wagon with the old-fashioned wooden Indian cigar signs. At a glance he noted that though the Indians were wooden, the quality of the carving was far from that. Father Damen introduced himself and discovered Mr. Anthony Buscher, an artist in wood carving from Baden, Germany. Anthony had come from his native land to earn money in America and had found the art atmosphere in Chicago rather foggy. He had fallen from his high estate as a sculptor in wood to a mere hewer of wooden cigar signs. It was not a difficult task for Father Damen to restore him to his blissful seat in the world of art, and

the beautiful high altar of the Holy Family Church, still holding its place as a triumph of fine wood carving, is the result of that chance meeting.

Another artistic find of Father Damen's was Louis Wisner. He discovered Wisner in that most unlikely habitat of Art, the purlieus of Fourteenth and Halsted Streets. Wisner was a Lutheran and a Freemason. How Damen came to find him we do not know. But it is probable that it was while making pastoral calls about the parish. Wisner had a Catholic wife and six children, all Catholics, and Damen no doubt visited them as he did all the members of his flock. Wisner, like Buscher, was a wood carver of the first rank, and Damen gave him the contract of carving the Communion railing of the church. There are seventeen panels in this railing, which extends across the church, each one an original creation, all of them Eucharistic in character and treatment. It was a novel subject for Wisner, but while the work was on, Damen visited him every day and guided him with suggestions. The completed railing is a masterpiece, perhaps as fine as any piece of wood carving in the United States. It has been studied and admired by artists from all parts of the country.

Chicago was hardly an art center in the 'fifties, and Damen was not so fortunate in happening on painters as on wood carvers. For the Stations of the Cross and other paintings he would take no risk. His thoughts turned to Europe. In a letter to Father Beckx, the General of the Jesuits, after describing eloquently the growing parish in Chicago, he continues:

> I know how dangerous it is for a religious to ask anything for himself, but I have no fear in asking for things that are for the common good. I will give a proof of this to your Paternity. Since you cannot help us in a pecuniary way, I will ask you to send us a gift of fourteen pictures of the Way of the Cross for our new church.

I know that your Paternity will not refuse this, for I know the great interest you take in our work in Chicago. You will probably be able to get them at a bargain in Rome. And we have a Brother there who is an artist. He might do them for us. These pictures should be three or four feet wide. I hope they will be worthy of the General of the Society of Jesus.

What do you think of this, Very Reverend Father? Don't shake your head, now, but say, 'Oh, yes, that is right. I am going to send something beautiful to Chicago, to excite the admiration and sustain the piety and the devotion of all these good people and at the same time console my dear sons in the Lord.'

Damen had good artistic taste and from his travels he remembered beautiful things. When he was building St. Ignatius College a few years later he recalled paintings he had seen. He writes to his Provincial:

Please write for me to the Provincial of Belgium to beg of him to allow the Brother painter of his Province to copy for our new St. Ignatius College the paintings which hang in the sanctuary of our church in Brussels, representing Blessed Canisius before the Cardinal and the Emperor, and Blessed Berchmans before the Blessed Virgin, making the vow to defend the Immaculate Conception. The former Provincial had promised me this when I was in Belgium; I, of course, paying all expenses.

The Provincial in St. Louis was not always able to keep pace with Damen's speed. The extent of his plans seemed abnormal and the ways Damen went plunging over the crest of one debt wave into the trough of another kept his Superior on the anxious seat through these first years of building. There were evident reluctances in approving of Damen's emergency ideas, refusals to make him loans, suggestions that he save by altering the work begun. Damen managed to get through all these entanglements. On the subject of altering the plans Damen writes in answer to the Provincial:

CHICAGO, June 16, 1858.

Very Reverend dear Father Provincial:

I have received your favor. It is out of the question to reduce the stone work at present. The contracts were signed in St. Louis. A great deal of the work is done already. About one hundred and fifty men are at work on the church and of course no changes can be made. If we do they will bring in bills for extras afterwards. . . .

Damen here is clearly annoyed at the impractical idea of reshaping plans in midstream. It was like asking the leader of an orchestra to change the key in the middle of a movement. The Provincial's point of view seemed reasonable enough, for it was a critical time and the whole country was in a money famine. But he did not yet realize Damen's power, nor the quality of the people working with him. That combination was going ahead, panic or no panic. They astonished even the Chicagoans who were watching them, so it is not entirely strange that they mystified the Provincial in St. Louis.

What with his providing and placing every material thing in the parish, from shingle nails to oil paintings, one would suppose that Damen had his fill of occupation. Yet this was but a side issue with him. It was merely the installing of the proper machinery, the opening of roads to handle the crowding spiritual traffic of the parish. During the building period this spiritual traffic was never interrupted. On the contrary, it kept constantly increasing and Damen always considered it his main work. There were the week-day Masses, and on Sunday an extra High Mass with Vespers in the afternoon and Benediction; Confessions and Communions in great numbers; sick calls, preparing the dying, burying the dead; helping the poor, caring for the schools, organizing sodalities, instructing converts, journeying after lost sheep. There was preaching to

be done and Damen did most of it. Solemn festivals were celebrated with all the pomp he could give them; there were novenas, May devotions, Lenten services, triduums and retreats. Everything the Church could give in the way of spiritual help was poured out to the people with a generous hand.

In all this varied work Damen did his full share. It is true that he had able assistants. Father Charles Truyens was with him during the first three, the hardest years. Fathers Michael Corbett, Ignatius Maes and John Bouchard were in the parish for part of this time, so that after the first year Damen had at least two assistants. But even with this the work was overwhelming. The parish outstripped the rest of Chicago in its growth and three priests there were *nantes in gurgite vasto*. It finally took ten priests to handle the successive waves of newcomers who settled around the church.

In this whirlwind Damen was everywhere. He had a seemingly inexhaustible reserve strength that enabled him to rise to every situation. Indeed he so identified himself with the parish work that the people talked of 'Father Damen's church' and 'Father Damen's parish.' Only very often they called him 'Father Diamond,' not an unfitting sobriquet.

At intervals, when there was a lull in the storm and he could get someone to replace him, he would take a vacation. This consisted in going out from Chicago to give a mission, lasting for a week or two. The missionary spirit was in him like an underground river and it kept working its way to the surface.

In a letter to Father General, July, 1858, he gives an account of his work during some of these absences from home:

During the winter I have given missions and retreats which have produced immense fruit. I have given the Spiritual Exercises in Chicago in two churches, in which

we had nine thousand Confessions; in the city of Peoria, with two thousand Confessions; in Galena, two thousand and in Rockford, eight hundred Confessions.

In all these places religion had suffered very severely, Catholics fallen away from the Church, of whom many had become Protestants or infidels. All these have been brought back and many Protestants converted. I have had the consolation of baptizing several Protestants, among them two ministers. The perseverance of these converted sinners and Protestants has been most edifying, as I hear from the letters of the Bishops and pastors testifying to the effects of the missions.

About eighty non-Catholics were received into the Church. The crowds attending the instructions were astonishing and we were in the confessionals from early in the morning until eleven or twelve o'clock at night. Our great grief was that we could not hear the Confessions of all the poor sinners who presented themselves, though several nights we did not go to bed at all, but remained all night in the confessionals. The secular clergy and the Dominicans assisted us in hearing the Confessions. I preached three or four times every day.

In one of the missions I gave this winter, the church was sold for debt while I was giving the Exercises. It was worth twenty-five thousand dollars and was bought by a Protestant for seventeen hundred. But Divine Providence sent him to listen to the Exercises. He was moved, convinced, and before the end of the mission I had the consolation of receiving him into the Church. And the church which he had bought was restored to the pastor, or rather the Bishop, of the diocese. This was in Galena, Illinois.

The mission at X. was followed by very happy results. The wealthy class of the city, who for many years had not approached the Sacraments, assisted at the Exercises, were touched by divine grace, brought back to God and became examples of repentance and piety. I established there a sodality of which the Bishop became spiritual director. It is composed of judges, lawyers, merchants, etc. These gentlemen, who have been absent from the Sacraments for ten, fifteen, twenty years, are now faithful in

communicating every month in a body and are seen sweeping the church, to the wonder and edification of the whole city.

In the same city, too, I was visited by Protestant preachers and others who came to convert me from my errors. I received them courteously, and conversed with them on the doctrines of the Church. But they left me to the mercy of God as an old papist who was beyond all hope of conversion. In fact, I think they felt rather doubtful about their own salvation after their conversation with me.

After two years of organizing and building, he writes to the Father General a résumé of the work. The letter is written in French.

Very Reverend and dear Father:

As I know that it is always gratifying to your Paternity to hear from your sons, I have resolved to write to you.

The slate roof of the large church is now completed. We have an outstanding debt of seventy-five thousand francs. However, we possess enough, in fact more than enough property, to pay for this. The property was given for the church and I shall sell it when conditions will be more favorable. I intended to sell half of it for thirty-five thousand francs, but Reverend Father Provincial thought that this would be too much of a sacrifice, as in a short time this property will be worth a hundred thousand.

Since our coming to Chicago, hardly two years ago, I have paid two hundred and sixty-five thousand francs. I collected one hundred and ninety thousand of this among the Catholics of Chicago. The remaining seventy-five thousand (the debt I have just mentioned) I borrowed. Of this I hope to be able to pay one-third during the summer.

Times are hard here; money circulation is poor. However, I thank God that we are here in Chicago. This is indeed where our Society should be. This city will become one of the largest in the United States, and the good we are doing here surpasses all that could be hoped. Our frame church is always packed and many are turned away for lack of accommodation. During the sermons

there is such a crowd that the people are wedged into the church. Many remain outside. They cannot get in. They hear Mass and the sermons through the windows which we leave open. I have seen these dear people stand for hours in the rain and snow.

Every Sunday evening we have a meeting of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners, and I give a sermon on the dogmas of our holy religion. Many Protestants and infidels come. Unfortunately some are dropping out. These belong to the wealthier classes and they do not care to be crushed in the crowd if they are lucky enough to get into the church.

Oh, my dear Father, you must understand how I regret that I am not able to finish the large church which could accommodate five or six thousand people. Oh, how many could we not bring back to the true faith and how many more to the practice of virtue and religion. Even as things are, we spend a great deal of time in the confessional. Sometimes we have to stay till midnight. On Holy Saturday we heard Confessions until half past one in the morning.

During the month of May we have devotions to the Blessed Virgin twice a day and the church is too small to accommodate all who come. In the morning, about eight hundred, mostly women, come to the exercises. In the evening just as many men come for the sermon. We hear Confessions every day, not only during May, but throughout the year.

We have received a number of Protestants into the Church, among them two ministers. As for the Catholics of Chicago and especially those of our parish, it is indeed admirable, consoling, how they have advanced in virtue and piety since our coming here. The Fathers who are with me are quite astonished at it all. Often we say to one another, 'Is not this wonderful? Could we ever have imagined that God would bless our labors as abundantly as He has done? How good these people are! What reverence, what obedience, what solid piety! Two years ago there was drinking, profanity; religious practices were not in evidence, the Sacraments not frequently received. And now these good people are so attached to the service of

God, receive the Sacraments so frequently, that without God's special help, we should not be able to do the work.'

What has helped us greatly to this success is the great facility for preaching that God has given me. He has so favored me in this, that fifteen minutes are sufficient for me to prepare to preach on any subject, whether moral, dogmatic or controversial.

We have now about four hundred children in our day school. These children are taught by paid instructors. In our Sunday school we have between seven and eight hundred children. This work is directed by Father Truyens. Likewise we have established the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin for the men, with one hundred and twenty members now enrolled. Every Sunday they meet to recite the Office and I give them a sermon.

During last winter I spent two months in the Novitiate making my third year of probation. And here I will take the liberty, dear Father, to tell you that I am not very grateful to you for giving me so short a time for my tertianship. I needed an entire year to shake off the dust I have gathered since my first probation, nineteen years ago. However, these two months did some good, maybe a great deal of good. The thirty-day retreat was surely the happiest time of my life, and I wondered how God could give so many consolations and sweetnesses to one who had been so unfaithful and had committed so many sins, at least before his entrance into the Society. How many times did I say, 'Lord, it is good to be here!' But I knew that this was self-seeking and then I would reject these thoughts.

As a result of my absence, I have not been able to give many missions this winter. I gave one at the Mehan settlement; one at Peoria, one in our church at Milwaukee and another at the Cathedral in the same city. During all these missions, I preached three times a day and the exercises were followed by the most consoling results. Every one of the four churches was filled and they crowded around the confessional from morning until midnight. You can imagine the time we got to bed and we had to begin over the next morning at five o'clock. We had great need of confessors everywhere. Many sinners, after waiting

whole days, were obliged to forego the hope of Confession. I was much grieved for these poor souls, faithful to the grace inwardly moving them, their hearts filled with the compunction poured into them by the Holy Ghost, yet not allowed the happiness of actually making their confession. The Fathers at Milwaukee felt about this as I did.

How many times did I desire to be employed solely as a missionary, for, as the Bishop of Milwaukee told me, I was born to be a missionary. When I have preached two or three times a day for two months and have been in the confessional from five in the morning until twelve at night, I feel not at all tired and my voice is as strong and as clear as ever, although I ordinarily preach an hour, or an hour and a half, with great vigor. For the louder the preacher, the more he is thought of by the Irish and Americans. You cannot imagine, Very Reverend Father, how much good is done by means of these missions, how many poor sinners are brought back to God after neglecting the Sacraments for years, how many sacrilegious Confessions repaired, how many vices plucked out and virtues planted. For these reasons, Very Reverend Father, I would earnestly beg of you to have Father Provincial select two or three Fathers for mission work alone. And how happy I should be if I were selected. Yes, I would heartily thank God if this should happen, although I am not asking for it. . . . I am,

Very respectfully and affectionately, Very Reverend and very dear Father General,

Your most obedient son in our Lord,

A. DAMEN, S.J.

P.S. As you may notice, Very Reverend Father, I have had this letter recopied, as my writing is so bad that you should never have been able to read it.

The real Damen appears very clearly here in the general outlines of his character, as indeed, in writing to his spiritual superior, he intended that it should: his business ability, his power of organizing, his gifts as a preacher, his fearlessness of hard work and his strength to endure it. He gives us a distinct sense that he revels

in work, and that, much as he has done, he has by no means yet reached the limit of his reserves. We see, too, his single aim in all that he does—to help others to save their souls, while not neglecting his own soul. Underneath it all, with a simple directness, he shows whither the main current of his desires is running—toward the mission field. He spoke truth when he said he was born to be a missionary. He says he is not asking for it, by which he means that he will not seek to force the General's hand. But it is plain where his heart is. In the event that he had never been sent to the missions, he would certainly have spent himself faithfully in whatever narrower circle he was placed. But it is equally certain that he would have felt himself tethered there.

He was contented in the Holy Family parish and he loved all its people. But one of the reasons why he was content, was that in the spirit of its growth it was to him very much like a continuous mission. The crowds flocking to hear him preach, the fervor of their lives, the large numbers of Confessions and Communions, the prodigals coming back to the fold, the steady flow of converts, all this was the breath of his nostrils, the delight of his missionary's soul. Nevertheless, even this was not enough. Other sheep there were of his Father's fold and he was straitened until they should be delivered. Hence his journeys, whenever he could spare the time, beyond the big parish. He was reaching out to other souls who, he felt, were calling him.

CHAPTER X

AT WORK IN THE PARISH

WHILE the Gothic church was working its way upward, the prairie for miles about was filling up with homes. A bird's-eye view of the ensemble would hardly call it a vision of gorgeous palaces. Early settlers, as a rule, have not begun with palaces. Neither could we say, in the poetic sense, that the parish 'rose like an exhalation.' Exhalations were common enough, but they came up from the wet and often water-filled prairies. If one could perch where the top of the church tower later came to be, all one would see would be acres upon acres of little wooden houses, sometimes bunched together like bees in a swarm, sometimes reaching out tentacles across the open spaces, spreading and thickening as they went. One-story cottages, very many of them; a lesser number with two stories. The few buildings taller than this were stores. Lumber was cheap and plentiful and the first idea was to get under cover. How the cover looked was relatively unimportant.

It was the first chance to own a home that they had ever had. Ninety per cent of these settlers had come from a land where for more than three hundred years their ancestors had been forced into the tradition of never owning anything. Dispossessed by violence of their native land, they had come at last into harbor and, like mariners climbing ashore after a wreck, all they were able to do then was to build them a shelter. Here, at last, were a few feet of land they could openly call their own without fear of eviction. Yet these were the people that set to work at once and, forgetting their

personal needs, built a huge Gothic church, six schools and filled the first Catholic college in the city of Chicago. The ancestral inheritance of the 'land of saints and scholars' told in their lives the moment they were free. No wonder Father Damen loved them!

They had their faults, of course, and sometimes serious faults. But the way they received the Sacraments proved that they had sense enough at least to acknowledge these and to try to correct them. The marvel is that after three centuries of persecution, they had not been completely disorganized spiritually.

Whatever the architectural limitations of their present position, therefore, nothing interfered with their energy. They turned their hands to anything that could earn them a living. Most of them had to take up ordinary laboring by the day, in railroad yards, or along the river and the lake, loading and unloading trains and boats. Many found their way into trades and became mechanics, blacksmiths, teamsters, bricklayers, carpenters, sailors. Others opened stores for clothing, boots and shoes, groceries and meats. One of the businesses that gave Father Damen and the priests of the parish a great deal of trouble was the saloon. In certain sections many owners of these saloons sold liquor recklessly, spreading the drink habit and impoverishing families. The pastors made a strong drive on this abuse, checked it and finally reduced it to a minimum. Some of Damen's most powerful sermons were delivered against this evil. He organized a total abstinence society that for more than twenty-five years was a strong bulwark against drunkenness. By that time the evil had practically disappeared.

The rank and file of the parish, however, were people of upright, steady lives, clean, industrious, generous to a degree. Naturally, in the beginning, there was poverty, in many cases such as to need relief. Father Damen discovered this at once. On January 14, 1858,

but a few months after the completion of the wooden church, the following announcement was read from the altar:

In order to relieve the poor of the parish we have adopted the following plan: Two or three gentlemen will call on the parishioners for contributions for the poor. The provisions will be kept in the pastoral residence. Two ladies will visit the poor in order to prevent imposition. These ladies will give an order to supply the wants of the indigent. For this week the lady visitors will be Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Hickey. The collectors this week will be Mr. Martin, Mr. O'Neill and Mr. William Creed.

This aid to the poor was systematically continued for two years, when the St. Vincent de Paul Society was invited to organize a branch made up of parish members. In June, 1860, the Holy Family Conference was formally aggregated to this Society, with Father Truyens as their first spiritual director, and their first report, a year later, tells us that thirteen hundred dollars was expended in that time for the poor. With what fidelity their work has since been carried on we can gather from their report of activities from 1859 to 1922, which totals more than eighty-one thousand visits made and ninety-five thousand dollars expended.

Apart from those who needed immediate relief, there was not much cause for the reproach of luxury among the rest of the district. For several years Chicago remained a vast mud flat with no paved streets, no street cars, sidewalks up and down like the teeth of a saw. In wet weather every step outside of the house to church, to school, to work, was taken ankle deep in ooze; the water supply, so plentiful underfoot, was half a mile away when it came to getting a drink of it; rain water had to be carefully gathered into cisterns. These elementary discomforts indicate sufficiently the primitive lives of these pioneers. Nearly every home derived its milk supply from the family cow and much of its

meat from the family geese, ducks, turkeys and chickens. A herdsman with his dog came along the street every morning, assembled his quota of cows and drove them out to the wide prairies where they contentedly munched the wild grass all day and returned at night, lowing down the street, ready for milking, the herd gradually vanishing away in its progress as each trained cow gracefully stepped aside into its proper gateway when its house was reached. This service of the herdsman cost twenty-five cents per week per cow. As regards upkeep and location, the poultry was more easily taken care of. The long and beautiful ditches flanking the streets were as Venetian canals whereon, in stately fashion, squadrons of ducks and geese sedately oared themselves adown the flood. The various back yards of the homes accommodated the turkeys and chickens and at intervals the ensemble united in an inspired and frenzied *tutti* of gabbling, quacking, gobbling, cackling and crowing that would make the modern jazz orchestra turn pale with envy. This was west side Chicago in the 'sixties. And right from the middle of this spread of mud, water and wooden houses soared the walls and tower of the Gothic church, silent but eloquent witness to the lofty and aspiring spirit of these pioneers.

Hardships have their compensations. Where all are struggling with like difficulties and problems, a sense of brotherhood easily thrives. So, in the people gathered together around Father Damen, there grew a lasting comradeship. They worked together, prayed together, came to know one another with the intimacy of a family group. The name Holy Family given to their parish was not altogether a misnomer. The virtues of the little house of Nazareth were carefully imitated in many a home on this prairie and between families a spirit of mutual friendliness and help prevailed. It is interesting today to listen to a meeting of any of the

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very old-timers who have not seen each other for some years—the quick inquiries they make for ancients of the parish they have lost track of, the litany of names they can call up as easily as counting, the fresh memories they retain of little traits of character, little ways their old friends had, and of the exact spot in which they lived, the prayers they repeat aloud for the souls of those who are gone, all of it telling more vividly than words that friendships were branded deep into the heart during those early days.

Over all this territory Damen ranged with the familiarity and the affection of a father. He knew every foot of the ground; he could call by name everyone in the parish. He was at home with them all, and he knew how to take them, singly or together. The result was that they met without any of the indirect finesse that degenerates so often into insincerity. They never approached each other through the fog of what is called diplomatic relations.

A curious coalition this, of a Dutchman directing an Irish parish. Of course similar combinations have happened before, but as a rule the outcome is at best merely a *succès d'estime*. National temperament is a tricky thing to handle, but Damen and his flock passed the test perfectly. On first thought, nothing would appear to be more opposite than the two temperaments —the traditional Hollander, stolid, conservative, slow, unimaginative; the Irishman, aggressive, nimble-witted, quick and humorous. Yet, a further reflection would perhaps reveal more in common between them than a surface view would suggest. Beneath the staid outer shell of the Dutchman we saw slumbered romance, waiting only the apt touch to waken it to life. And under the vivacious exterior of the Irishman lurks a tenacity that, once in action, makes him the world's best soldier. With Damen and his people both these came to pass. Damen's appeal for Catholic action

roused the fighting spirit of the Irish, and their immediate and whole-hearted response touched into flame his spirit of romance. The grace of God welded these two things together and henceforth they were one force. An ideal combination wherein each gave to and took from the other.

With all the speed and concentration of the work, and the accompanying problem of making ends meet financially, there was never any visible strain, none of the peevishness or criticism that sometimes mars otherwise generous work. A sunny cheerfulness pervaded the parish; the helping hand was everywhere in evidence. If sacrifices had to be made, they were made, and no brooding about it. They cast their bread upon the waters and trusted the Lord for its return.

On his side, Damen was the soul of good nature. He moved about the parish, always serene, affable, inspiring confidence wherever he went. Even when he was shuddering interiorly over his debts, apparently caught in a blind alley, begging the Provincial and the General for help, he never let the least hint of his trouble escape to the parish. His strong, robust figure, growing somewhat portly with the years; his clear and humorous eyes; his smile, at once naïve and wise; his manner, dignified and yet inviting; his voice, that could be so terrifying in the pulpit, warm and gracious in conversation, with an undercurrent of easy fun in it that came often spontaneously to the surface; a natural, unassuming, but virile poise in all he said and did, these won him welcome in every corner of the parish, made him a member of the family, and established him in the intimacy and unshaken trust of every soul under his care. There were no scenic distances between Damen and his people.

This could be noted by any observer every day in the week, for while the parish was in its first years of growing, Damen was always about it. Often after a

hard day's work going from house to house begging for the church, he would find himself at supper time far away from home. He kept going until he found some family just getting ready to serve the meal, when he said to the housewife:

'Mrs. Brady, don't forget me, but put on an extra plate for me. I'm too far away from the house now to be in time for supper, and the Brother will be bothered if I come in late. He won't have to get an extra supper and I can go ahead with my calls.'

This sudden intrusion upon the family supper of the most distinguished person in the district might fluster our modern hostess, but Mrs. Brady took it with all the calm poise of her guest.

'Indeed, we're proud to have you with us, Father Diamond. Mary, set a plate for Father.' And the whole family, father, mother and the children sat around the table, with Father Damen in the midst, chatting comfortably. It was a proud evening for Mrs. Brady, and the neighbors were sure to hear about it.

On another occasion he found himself at about dinner time in the vicinity of O'Neill's Woods, a large grove of trees along the river just west of Halsted Street, now the habitat of packing houses, lumber yards and railroads. Thomas O'Neill was a close friend, and Father Damen never missed him when passing that way. Today, however, he had a special reason for calling. He was very low in funds. Mrs. O'Neill welcomed him and invited him to dinner with the family.

'Thank you, Mrs. O'Neill, but I'll have to be at home for dinner today. But I'm in great trouble today and what would be better now than a dinner to me would be a helping from the sugar bowl.' And he pointed to an old-fashioned china bowl above the fireplace. Without any hesitation, Mrs. O'Neill took down the bowl, handed it to him, and told him to help him-

self. Father Damen took out some of the sugar, telling her how much he took. 'Now, Mrs. O'Neill,' he said, 'this refreshes me more than any dinner could today. It will carry me over a dangerous bridge.' The sugar bowl contained the family loose supply of cash.

One evening he was going through a neighborhood where saloons were plentiful, and he happened upon one of his well-to-do parishioners. A glance told Damen that the man wasn't doing so well on this particular evening. He was evidently making the grand tour of all the saloons in the district, and he had arrived at the stage of interior illumination where he was in love with all the world and his money belonged to anybody who would take it. He hailed Father Damen as a long-lost friend, the best friend he ever had. Nobody would ever part them.

'What are you doing over here, John?' asked Father Damen. 'Looking for the church?'

This abrupt question jolted John's brain into a suspicion that perhaps all was not well in this best of possible worlds. He gazed at Father Damen with a puzzled gravity.

'Well, you should be in the church, John, making the Stations of the Cross,' continued Father Damen. 'But you're over here making the whiskey stations.'

'Father, you're right. That's what I'm doing,' said John, with a solemn pathos.

'I should think that if you have money to throw away, John, you wouldn't go around supporting saloons with it, making them rich and helping them to make other men drunkards. Look at your poor church over there trying to get itself built. Why don't you throw some money into that and help other men to be good.'

John plunged his hand into his pocket and took out a roll of bills, every dollar he had.

'Here, take it all, Father,' said he. 'It's for a grand cause.'

Damen hesitated, for it was a considerable amount of money and John didn't know how much it was. But realizing that it was either he or the saloon keepers who would get it, he took it.

'Come and see me tomorrow, John,' he said. 'And now that you have no more to spend on drink, go home and sober up.'

John did as he was told and the next day came around very shamefacedly to see Father Damen.

'Here is your money, John,' said Damen. 'But I ought to have a commission for saving it for you.'

'No,' said John. 'Keep it all, Father. What you gave me was worth it. I won't take any of it. But I will take the pledge, if you will give it to me.'

John took the pledge and that was the last of his drinking. He became one of the most faithful workers of the Holy Family Temperance Society.

The auctioning off of Damen's horse and buggy was a signal that the parish stocking was completely empty and the next thing they might expect was to see him going around barefooted. This might be regarded as a trick of good showmanship, and no doubt it was touched with a flavor of old-time melodrama. But the truth is, and Damen's letters clearly reveal it, on these occasions he was pushed to the limit to make his payments, and did not know where to turn for help. The debt that stalked him was an honest ghost; no make-believe about it.

On the day announced for the auction a large crowd assembled at the designated spot, in the open, and the bidding began. One of the cleverest auctioneers in the city was secured. 'No charge whatever for my services,' he said. 'Only too glad to contribute a small share to Father Damen's church.' There were many of these auctioneers in Chicago then, as street-corner selling was

common, and the argot of the expert ballyhoo artist was a delight to the crowds that invariably surrounded him. Likely enough, too, it was here that Damen got his first idea of capitalizing on his transportation. The auctioneer unleashed his chameleon vocabulary; humor, pathos, a sweep into the sublime, and the crowd was hypnotized. Up goes the bidding. Cheers from the non-bidders as the formidable bid is made. 'Going—going—gone! My dear sir, I congratulate you. Father Damen's horse and buggy are yours.' Louder cheers, followed by an aftermath of sighs that poor Father Damen will have to foot it on the mudpaths once more.

So he does. For some weeks he cheerfully tramps and trudges over the swampy alluvium of Chicago's west side, into the houses and stores, and departing leaves behind him, invariably, footprints racy of the soil. At last a few of the business men agree that this shall not go on. It is perhaps interesting to observe a distinguished looking gentleman in a frock coat and top hat picking his way around boggy places, skidding in the sludge and balancing himself across boards over wide water-filled ditches. But this, continued day after day in all weathers, pushes the humor of the thing past even the Pickwickian stage. And when they remember it is their pastor performing thus, they must stop it at once. It will shame the parish. Father Damen must be taken out of the mud. A subscription is started. It goes over with a bound. Another horse and buggy appear, Father Damen driving, and appearing as the parish believed their pastor should appear.

There were times, however, when all visible help failed him. The continuous blight of the panic withered every prospect and he was almost tempted to give over the work and wait for better times. 'One day,' Damen tells this story himself, 'I was obliged to meet a heavy payment or to foreclose. I had no money and I could see

no way to procure it. I went into the church and up to the tabernacle and I knocked at the little door. "Dear Lord," I said, "You are here. I need money to pay this debt. Give me the necessary amount." In time to meet the payment the exact sum was sent to me.'

It might be supposed that this constant round of begging tours among people who were themselves rising up from poverty, and especially during these years of panic, would prove most embarrassing to anyone who had to go through with it. No doubt Father Damen would have preferred an easier way of meeting his difficulties. His letters show that he was alert for any short-cut he could make, and most ingenious in the ways of saving, and of reducing debts. But after all this, he had to face begging as the only solution. Distasteful as the work in itself certainly was, Damen never showed himself oppressed or annoyed by it. He created a friendly atmosphere around him by acting always as though he had come among friends. Those who were unable to assist him were never made to feel that they were in any way less close to him. He brought cheerfulness with him and left it after him. When he could not get a contribution, he told them prayers would be still better, and asked for prayers. He had as many praying for the church as going to it.

His mingled air of dignity, sweetness and repose gave him a charm of manner that nobody could resist. There was no standing on ceremony with him, none of the formality of the pompous man who inflicts himself on the bourgeoisie as a 'personage.'

'Where is Tom?' he asks, walking into a store and inquiring of Mrs. Tom for her husband.

'Father, he is out in the barn,' says Mrs. Tom. 'I'll go and call him in.'

'No, no,' says Father Damen. 'I'll go out and find him.'

This knockabout life seemed to make no impression

on his physical powers. For a large man, he was very brisk of movement, but unhurried. Though just about medium height, he somehow gave the impression that he was much taller. He wearied under no strain. At the end of a day's hard work, indoors and out, his energy still bubbled up like fresh water from a spring. Mr. Joseph A. Connell, of Chicago, writes an impression of Father Damen at a later period which is still a good portrait of him in earlier years.

I served Mass for him [Mr. Connell says] at St. Joseph's Home on May Street many times. As my recollection runs, it was in the winter of 1882-83. The Mass began, as I recall, at six, or possibly 5:45. I know it was an unconscionably early hour. Mike Lambert and I were appointed to serve, and it so happened that without any prearrangement we alternated at the serving. Evidently the effort of getting up so early was too much for us as a regular thing, and we instinctively found this way out of the difficulty.

I remember Father Damen, of course, in the pulpit. He certainly could make himself heard. One occasion particularly comes to memory. A collection had been taken up for some special purpose—I forget what—but anyway Father Damen came out after Communion and went into the pulpit. The substance of his remarks was to the effect that 'they were a good people, a holy people, but they were not a charitable people.' He said they had expected the collection would be about so much and it was less than half of what they expected.

I was told some time ago that when he was giving a mission in Galesburg, Ill., he found out that the people had bought a lot in the outskirts of the city and were going to build a church there. But he persuaded them to sell that lot and to buy the property where the present church stands.

I remember, too, my father and mother telling me many times that when the Holy Family church was built there was hardly a house between where they lived at Jefferson and Forquer Streets, and the church.

Damen was a tremendously impressive man, full of energy and force. He seemed in a way to typify energy and force.

There was something almost gigantic about him. And this was not due to his size, although he was a big man. Rather it was due to the feeling he inspired that he was a very torrent of energy, which he could not control, but which, in a way, swept him on. And with it all he was kindness itself. You could feel his goodness and kindness as he passed by.

I did not intend to write all this when I started—but he was a great man, a giant of a man.

The ordinary man seemed more or less of a pygmy alongside of him. But over and above his energy and force and greatness was his goodness. That was his supreme quality.

He made one think of the clergyman in the Deserted Village, except that he was no Cliff. He was a man on whose head eternal sunshine visibly rested.

His life day after day called on all to follow him to that world to which his constant example led the way.

We have said much about Damen's journeyings in collecting money. But he was no mere tax-gatherer. He was alive all the time to every possible need of his people. In his goings about he found the poor, who were too shy to ask for help; he came upon the sick who were neglected and not reported to the pastor; he picked up strays from the church and brought them back; among non-Catholics, where he was very well known, he made many converts; he mended family differences, some of them of long standing. Hardly a day passed that he did not return carrying some lost sheep on his shoulders.

He did not, either, give the mere remnants of his time to any cases he came upon. He attended to them immediately and kept caring for them until the trouble was settled. He was much bolder in asking money for the poor than for his church.

Father Thomas Wallace, of St. Louis University, who knew Father Damen well, sends us this reminiscence:

Here is one that Father Damen told me in Omaha. He had come upon a poor family who needed help badly. It would take ten dollars—a considerable sum then—to carry them across their immediate wants. One of his parishioners, who had a farm near Canal Street (think of a farm near Canal Street now) was a well-to-do, and a generous man, ever ready to help out. But the good wife was quite close and had something to say on the disbursement of the family funds. Father Damen made his way to their home. The husband was down in the field working. Father Damen passed him on the way and went on to the house. Mrs. X. met him at the door, socially hospitable but financially on the defensive.

'I need ten dollars, Mrs. X.,' said Damen, 'for a poor family out on the prairie. They are starving and sick and we must help them.'

'I am sorry to hear it,' said Mrs. X., 'but you know how money is now. It's hard for all of us. There isn't a penny in the house.'

'Yes,' said Damen, 'I know all about how hard it is to get money. But, my good woman, if you will go upstairs now and take out the stocking you keep hid in the left-hand corner of the bureau drawer, you will find ten dollars there. Take it out and give it to me for that poor family.'

Mrs. X. stood dazed, speechless, looking at Father Damen as at a visitor from the other world. How, except by supernatural means, could he ever have known about that stocking? Oh, nothing could be hid from Father Damen. She ran up the stairs, came down in a minute and pushed the ten dollars into his hands.

I asked Father Damen how he knew where she kept her savings. He laughed heartily and said he guessed it. I did not have the nerve to inquire further into the mystery. But I thought afterwards that the husband might have let the cat out of the bag. But evidently the wife

didn't think so, and all Father Damen would say was, 'I guessed it.'

It was not often, however, that Damen had to use strategy to obtain aid for the poor, and he was most open-handed in giving everything he could to them. That was one spot where he did not economize. But he watched that the deserving poor, and not impostors, were assisted.

One day a group of boys were playing near the church, when Father Damen came out of the pastor's residence and called one of them.

'Billy, run over to Taylor Street and see what kind of a house is at this number,' giving Billy a number. 'And hurry back and tell me.'

Billy skipped off to Taylor Street and, after looking around as well as he could, returned to Father Damen.

'There's no house at all at that number,' he reported.

'That's what I thought,' said Father Damen. And a few moments later a man was seen leaving the residence, wearing an air of virtuous indignation. He was a professional beggar, many of whom were then making a healthy living in Chicago, filching from charity. Damen was a little too much for them.

He kept his convert net spread as he went about and drew many souls into the fold. In the 'fifties, much more than today, a great fear of the Catholic priest possessed the non-Catholic. The more ignorant among non-Catholics still shuddered at the uncanny hoof-and-horn traditions they drank in at the family fireside in their youth.

I do not pretend to say that this obsession has by any means disappeared from our so-called liberal civilization. Only in Damen's time it lacked the veneer which later bigots have employed to cover its naked crudity. Anti-Catholic prejudice in the American 'fifties was much like the vulgar English prejudice New-

man describes in his *Present Position of Catholics.* A convert to Catholicity then was taboo, an outcast not only from all honest men but from all thinking minds. For he was either immoral or insane, and probably both. We know how, in England, even educated men seriously believed and spread the word that Newman had lost his mind. American prejudice was very similar to this.

Nevertheless Damen's converts during these years were many. His personality, with its candid, natural, affable approach, put him at one with non-Catholics in a very short time. Suspicion quickly evaporated under his sunny manner, confidence grew and finally attachment. Damen had the rare gift of being controversial without being bitter. One felt that back of his directness there was always an affectionate smile.

Mother Herbert, of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, tells us an incident characteristic of Damen's methods:

When we were living on Morgan street [she writes] there was a neighbor close by, a Protestant grandma with whom my mother was very friendly. Father Damen, when passing our place, used to drop in, and there he met Mrs. X. She was stanch in her creed but, unlike most of the Protestants of that day, liberal minded toward those of all other religions. Father Damen enjoyed chats with her. Indeed, quite heated controversies they often grew into. I used to sit on the top steps listening while they held forth on the front porch.

Invariably the good-by was this:

'Ah, then, Mrs. X., mark my words, you'll be one of my sheep yet. I'll have you in the Master's true fold one day.'

And her answer was, 'May the Lord's blessing descend on you, Father Damen, but that will never be. We'll meet above in heaven, though your road will be quite a different one from mine.'

But Father Damen would have the last word: 'Yes,

we'll meet up above, but we'll come in by the same path. You'll be my sheep yet.'

At the age of seventy-nine he baptized her and I led her to her First Communion. She died at the age of eighty-two. On her baptismal day she greeted Father Damen with the words:

'Well, and so it has come to pass. I'm your sheep, after all.'

'And a good sheep you are, Mrs. X.,' said Father Damen.

Damen's sense of humor was by no means submerged in the sea of his pastoral and building occupations. He was not one of those artificially intense persons who get on people's nerves by insisting on living in a constant atmosphere of strain and calling it efficiency. He knew that relaxation is a part of all good work, and if any innocent fun cropped out along the trail, he did not miss it.

On a very hot midsummer's day in 1859, Mr. Kelly, the shoemaker, sat in his shop on Twelfth Street, hammering away at old shoes. Just across the street was more hammering, for there the big church was going up. Wrapped in his leather apron and sweltering in his stuffy shop, the only relief he got was when an old crony of his would come into the place and bid him the time of day. For Mr. Kelly was popular among the neighbors.

This hot day one of them was in for a chat and the talk naturally turned on the weather. And after they had agreed for the third or fourth time that 'it was a terrible hot day—terrible!' they became conscious of an equally terrible thirst. But a few hundred feet away stood the corner saloon (this, all this, was in the olden time, long ago) and the thought of the cool beer nestling in the barrels there soon became maddening. Shortly after, a figure might be seen, bearing a shining bucket, moving cornerward with a jaunty air. In a

moment the same figure reappeared and glided with rather more speed, but with a ritualistic carefulness, back toward Kelly's shop, bearing the same shining bucket, now topped with a delicate froth. Be it understood, by way of parenthesis, that in those simple and primeval days, the carrying of a harmless, and perhaps necessary, pail of beer along the streets did not send a weird, shooting pain through the æsthetic sense of the passer-by, nor did it arouse any of the standardized emotions of horror and indignation among the 'holier-than-thou's,' let alone bringing out the machine guns. It was considered, in the language of that misguided period, 'perfectly all right.' And so Mr. Kelly's envoy passed on unmolested and if observed, observed with envy.

Meantime, Father Damen was in and out of the church opposite, watching the men at work. And as he stood deep in the dust of Twelfth Street, looking up at the building, out of the corner of his eye he caught the pilgrimage movement between the shop and the saloon. The thermometer was around one hundred. The dust was stifling. Father Damen felt thirsty himself.

So he waited until he saw the messenger enter Kelly's shop and close the door, when he stepped across the street and after a few moments entered. The two old lads hurriedly hid the foaming pail. There were no drinking glasses in the shop, and Mr. Kelly could never invite his pastor to drink out of the pail. Besides, there didn't seem to be enough for three. But Father Damen had apparently come for a long visit. He sat down comfortably and started a conversation that bade fair to take in the history of the world. After blankly listening for what seemed an interminable time, Kelly's old crony gave up in despair and left. As soon as he was outside, Father said to Kelly:

'Now, Tim, bring forth the royal bumper and we'll

have a quiet drink together. It's a very hot day and I'm perishing with thirst.'

Tim's theatrical look of ignorance and surprise was utterly lost on Father Damen, so he awkwardly fumbled under his work-bench and brought out the beer. Father Damen took a good drink from the bucket, thanked Mr. Kelly and went out to continue his work on the hot street.

Father Damen was a strong advocate of temperance, and against the indiscriminate selling of liquor. Some of his most powerful sermons were delivered upon this evil and in his everyday life about the parish he exercised steady pressure on the owners of dramshops especially, until many of these closed their business and most of the others came over to his idea of temperance. His way of handling each one singly had much to do with his success. However forcible he might be in the pulpit, he was careful never to be bitter with the individual. One day a man came to him and said:

'Father, I'm in the liquor business and I have a scruple about it.'

'What is your scruple?' asked Father Damen.

'Well, it's like this. The whiskey I sell is pretty strong, so I try to help the men who drink it to walk straight on their way home.'

'You mean you bring them home when they can't walk?'

'Oh, no, Father, I never let them get that bad. But I keep them from drinking too much whiskey, by weakening it with water. And that's what I have the scruple about. The whiskey is half water.'

'I see,' said Father Damen. 'I'll tell you what to do, John. You tell me that you give them half water and half whiskey. Well, take out the other half of the whiskey and put water in place of that. Then they'll be sure to walk straight when they go home.'

Among the non-Catholics of the parish Father

Damen had many friends whom he included in his visiting list. Many of them he brought into the church. Others helped him to build it. On occasion, he asked them for co-operation as readily as if they were of the parish. The Knisely family, living near the church, were very friendly with Father Damen. This was one of the few families who owned a piano. On one of his visits the piano caught Father Damen's eye. As usual he had a large payment clamoring for liquidation and was in his customary state of wonderment how he might meet it. The piano solved the difficulty. Without any preliminaries he turned to his hostess and said:

'Mrs. Knisely, may we have the use of your piano for a concert?'

Naturally, Mrs. Knisely was taken aback. To have her precious piano taken from her home, carted along rutted streets for some blocks, hoisted into a hall, to be banged upon for hours by terrified amateurs, was not precisely her idea of taking care of a valuable instrument. Nevertheless, she listened, through her astonishment, to Father Damen's explanation of how much he needed, and when Damen finished she simply said:

'Yes, Father, you may have the piano.'

The concert cleared away the debt, and perhaps the piano. But we are left with pleasant memories of a courageous Mrs. Knisely.

CHAPTER XI

CURRENTS AND CROSS-CURRENTS

BY THIS time the big church began to bulk on the horizon. From any point along the river bank one could see it standing out on the prairie like a ship at sea. Strangers coming to the city, and looking to the west, inquired what was the huge building away out there. On being told that it was Father Damen's church, they asked if any Chicago people ever went that far to church. The houses about were so small and scattered that it appeared to be the only thing on the prairie. Many wise heads were shaken over the recklessness of the venture and many wise sayings passed to the effect that it likely was another case of much cry and no wool.

As Damen had forecast, however, it proved a big magnet drawing to itself from all sides Catholics who hungered for the services of the church. The whole west side of Chicago today, with its more than a million residents, owes the entire core of its growth and a great proportion of its actual spread to this church of the Holy Family. Ten years after Damen first stepped on the prairie, this fact was generally recognized in Chicago and commented on by the newspapers of the day. Damen was now gaining momentum slowly, but he was still compelled to create the ground under his feet as he moved, as the following letter to his Provincial indicates:

CHICAGO, May 24, 1859.

Very Reverend dear Father Provincial:

Your favor of the twenty-second instant surprised and

grieved me. You say I am in your debt and I supposed you were in my debt. You will surely remember that you promised me that from the fifteenth of February, 1859, you would charge me only six per cent on the $15,000 which the Province paid for the land in Chicago. And Jane Graham's property, bringing $300, would leave me to pay $50 a month. I think that you marked this in your book, for you observed that in case of your death this might cause trouble. You will also remember that I paid you all the interest due, to the time I left St. Louis.

I hope that your Reverence has not changed your mind and I do not think that you could conscientiously do so. For this contract was your own free offer and accepted by me; therefore binding in conscience till I break my part of the contract. I am working day and night in order to pay off the $5,000 which is due this summer, and you know well enough that this is no trifle in these hard times. And although I am anxious to finish the church this summer on account of the cheapness of materials and labor, and in order to do more good, and would therefore be willing to sacrifice the property, yet I cannot promise more than what you agreed to of your own accord.

I am astonished that you should have overlooked this. Your Reverence seems to forget all my troubles and anxieties, and because I have been able to make the July payment, you seem to think that I must have a great deal of money. I am now working hard to pay the August payment of $2,300. Please give me an answer as to what you can do. I have now said what I will be able to do this year.

Your obliged son,

A. Damen.

But the long and complicated struggle was drawing to its close. What looked in the beginning like plowing the rock had become in the short space of three years, the tilling of a rich and fertile field. Not one among his people now but would hold his soul out to Damen on the palm of his hand. His achievement in building

a church like a cathedral in the middle of a prairie and evoking a congregation around it, as if by magic, gave them a confidence in him that could not be shaken.

The finish of the first stage of Damen's work came in 1860. Father Garraghan, in his history, *The Catholic Church in Chicago,* gives us a résumé of the final days leading to the dedication, from which we quote:

Work on the new church went steadily forward. Early in 1860 contracts were let to Patrick O'Connor for the towers and front wall of the church and to Robert Carse for the stained-glass windows, 'work to be equal to that of the windows in St. James's church, North Side.' Progress in bringing the great structure to completion was now so rapid as to permit of the solemn dedication in the midsummer of 1860. The ceremony took place on Sunday, August 26, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a day in the Church's calendar dear to the heart of Father Damen, and was carried out with a degree of splendor quite unprecedented in the history of the Middle West. Thirteen members of the hierarchy were in attendance, Bishop Duggan being the officiating prelate, Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston celebrant of the Pontifical Mass, and Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis the preacher of the dedication sermon, while in the progress of the ceremony sermons were delivered in English by Bishop Carrell of Covington, in German by Bishop Henni of Milwaukee and in French by Bishop de St. Palais of Vincennes. Besides the prelates named there were present in the sanctuary Bishops Smyth of Dubuque, Juncker of Alton, Grace of St. Paul, Whelan of Nashville, Lefevre of Detroit, Luers of Fort Wayne and Timon of Buffalo. Mozart's Twelfth Mass, rendered under the personal direction of Father Maurice Oakley, one of the priests serving the parish, was the musical feature of the occasion. To Father Damen perhaps no day in all his career was quite like this in the splendid tokens of success with which it crowned his labors of the preceding three years. 'The Reverend Arnold Damen,' wrote in 1866 James W. Sheahan

of the Chicago *Times*, is the Hercules who has in a few years wrought all this work. To his energy, his ability, his sanctity, his perseverance and his great practical intelligence is due not only the erection of this magnificent edifice but the great spiritual success which has crowned the labors of the Society.'

It may be a surprise to the reader, as it was to the writer when first he read this program, to see the large number of Bishops assembled for this dedication, coming from Boston, Nashville, St. Paul and points between. Even today such a gathering of Bishops is unusual, but in 1860 it was, as Father Garraghan says, unprecedented in the West. And if we ask why it was that thirteen Bishops traveled from their homes hundreds of miles away, out to the prairies of west side Chicago, the only answer we can give is, Father Damen. These Bishops were all his personal friends. In those intervals of time he had taken as vacations during the three years of parish building, he had worked in the dioceses of these Bishops, giving missions. And they appreciated so well the good he had done, that when the occasion offered they came to visit him and his church, to bless its beginning and to encourage his people. I do not know of another such instance in the history of the Church in America.

In the little wooden church that he was now leaving, Damen had been much hampered. He felt as if he were stifling spiritually when he saw his three-year-old congregation, already rounding into vigorous adolescence, and no place to house it. Successive crowds packing the place to bursting and, at that, many turned away. It all made for confusion within the church, and straggling disorder without. And Damen liked nothing less than confusion and disorder.

Now at last he had room 'to do more good,' as he often said. At once the change was felt. Everything

fell into stride. The real formation of the parish began. Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin for men and boys, for girls and women; the League of the Sacred Heart, the Purgatorial Society and the Society of the Holy Rosary, the Acolythical Society, all came into being with the first years of the new church. The St. Vincent de Paul Society, already functioning, took on new vigor. The married men organized a band and the boys another. The choir very rapidly crystallized into a brilliant body of singers. The whole social life of the parish took visible, coherent shape, moving like one great family around the church as its center, and friendships were formed that, in spite of the later separations, have lasted through seventy years.

Father Damen was at the head of all these developments, encouraged, followed and directed them. It was evident, however, that he could not carry it through by himself. As the spiritual tide rose in the parish and the great area that was prairie quickly began to take on the appearance of a city, he called on his Provincial for help. Priests and Brothers were sent steadily to the rescue, until within a few years it took a dozen workers to meet the situation. As their Superior, Father Damen proved himself wise and energetic. He had the sufficiently rare gift of putting the right man in the right place. And he had the further gift of letting them alone when he saw they were doing well.

Father Andrew O'Neil, builder and organizer of schools for more than thirty years in the parish, and Brother Thomas O'Neil, his lieutenant and brother, are examples of this. Their tireless efficiency in school work won for them the admiration of the Catholic hierarchy throughout the United States and Cardinal Gibbons said of their schools that they were the 'banner schools of America.'

Father Oakley had great talent as a musician, and

we see him producing Mozart's Twelfth Mass as the first Mass sung in the new church.

Brother Grennan was an expert tailor and a most versatile man of energy, taste and the gift of organization. We find him placed as sacristan and head of the Acolythical Society. To him the church owed the splendid outfitting of the boys who served the altar and the firm coherence that marked the group. He could handle boys. Father Damen admired his work so much that it was said that Brother Grennan could get permission to procure anything within reason for the sacristy, the altar or the altar boys.

So we could go on through the list. The main thing he desired to have from those under his direction was devoted work. His idea was that it was the business of the Lord and that all the Jesuit Community, himself included, should be faithful servants. One whose memory goes back to those days writes us: 'As superior he worked hard and he expected lots of work from his subordinates. Those who worked with him knew they had to work hard, very hard. He demanded it in no uncertain manner. Neither was he backward in calling on his parishioners to do things—to exert themselves for sodalities, schools, church. Anything like shirking, slacking, idling, waste of time, was intolerable to him.'

Yet the same writer continues: 'He was always a father to his people. Most fatherly. An infallible memory for names and faces. Never forgot anyone whom he had met.'

In his dealings with his Community he was approachable, affable, and in the best sense of the word, democratic. His natural dignity never degenerated into the affectation of pomp and circumstance with which smaller minds attempt to camouflage their ineptness. Sometimes in the early days he was criticized for a too rigid economy, bordering on penuriousness. This criticism may have had a basis in fact. As a Dutchman, he

was proverbially thrifty, and if we recall the desperate corners he found himself in while trying to save enough money for his debts during the long panic, we can conceive that Dutch thrift plus a panic could cause a tightening of the purse strings. He had every experimental reason to know the value of a dollar.

His direct and energetic manner, though generally tempered by cordial friendliness, at intervals slipped into bluntness. He was fully aware of this defect and openly rebuked himself for it whenever it happened. On one occasion he found it his duty to admonish one of the house for a lapse of obedience. The person at fault had previously been spoken to without effect by the official who had charge of his work, and finally the matter was laid before Damen. It promised for a time to be serious, for Damen had to inform the Provincial. In his letter he says:

I have now admonished him five or six times, but my admonitions have done no more good than Father X.'s. After reflecting for a day or two, I spoke to him pretty determinedly, *perhaps harshly, as this is my character* (the italics are Damen's); and he answered me most positively that he would not and seemed determined to carry it out.

The next day, he writes the Provincial again:

In my last letter I may have given you cause of trouble and uneasiness about N. I therefore write again to say that he is now very repentant for what he has done, and will endeavor to mind the recommendations given him. I am most happy to write this to your Reverence.

One of the rules of a Superior is that he give from time to time a report to headquarters of the general condition of the Community. A characteristic report of Damen is the following:

Our Community is getting along well. All seem to be very happy and this of course makes me happy, too. The

rules, as far as human frailty permit, are observed and all things are regulated by the bell. We have no trouble from without.

And again, a few years later:

As for the Community of our Chicago residence, everything goes well. Thanks to the mercy of God, there is a good spirit. All the members are obedient, respectful, filled with zeal and exact in the spiritual exercises. Charity is well cultivated among the members. We are all well united. All are not as well recollected in spirit as they ought to be, but we are all frail and shall try to do better in the future.

We are forced to conclude, from letters like these and from all we otherwise know of Damen, that he judged himself too severely in saying that his character was harsh. It is often energy and rapidity of thought that produce the effect of bluntness. There are characters who leap to a conclusion with a swift intuition and announce it with a suddenness that leaves slower minds gasping, and raises in them a mixed feeling of bewilderment and irritation. They are thus tempted to suspect they are being domineered over and hustled along and they resent having their accustomed pace so accelerated. Damen possessed in a high degree this practical instinct of quickly sensing the path out of a difficulty. This he would follow at once with an abruptness and decision that appeared rashness to others who did not see what Damen saw. Naturally, until they were well out of the woods and in the open, those who followed must sometimes have felt they were being somewhat dragged. Later, when they saw how unfailingly correct his estimates turned out to be, and how he could shoot apparently at random and yet consistently hit the mark, they all swung to his side and gave him full and implicit confidence. It is this trait in him which very likely made him accuse himself of

harshness, for we hear nothing in after years of lack of consideration for the feelings of those working with him.

During the early period of his undertakings, the fear that Damen was steering for the rocks of bankruptcy spread so far that it eventually reached to the General. With evident misgivings, he inquired into the situation, and Damen wrote the following letter in answer:

CHICAGO, June 27, 1865.

Very Reverend and dear Father:

I would have written you a long time ago, but the missions have so taken up my time that I could not find the opportunity, especially for writing in French, as your Reverence desires, a language I have almost forgotten.

Our Reverend Father Provincial has informed me that your Paternity is somewhat disturbed on account of our debts. Well, Reverend Father, I assure you that you have no cause for alarm on that score. We have a debt of forty thousand dollars, it is true, but we have also a property worth at least two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and we have a revenue of eighteen thousand dollars a year. We can save at least seven or eight thousand dollars a year. I believe that the finances of the Chicago residence are in better condition than those of any other house in the Province. And the interest of this debt helps to keep up the novitiate and scholasticate and the province would not be able to place the money at better rates. So again I assure you, Reverend Father, that our debts do not embarrass us at all and that your Paternity has no reason for disquiet on that score. Whoever informed you is not conversant with affairs in Chicago.

Our parish school is doing wonders. Father Andrew O'Neil is at the head with Brother Thomas O'Neil. We have almost nine hundred boys, who assist daily at Mass, three instructions a week by Father O'Neill, and Confessions every month. The pupils advance well in their studies, their conduct is very good and the school gives a great deal of satisfaction to the parents and the general

public. They have a musical band much admired in the city and praised highly by the papers.

The girls' school is under the direction of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart and is doing excellent work. But the building is miserable and very small. That is why they have but five hundred girls. Another reason is that their house is not sufficiently central in the parish. However, the two schools do immense good.

Our congregation is very edifying. Our parishioners practice their religion faithfully with such piety as to give us great consolation. Every week we have converts from Protestantism. Our congregation still grows in numbers and even the new church is now too small, although the good Father Visitor said at the time of his visitation that it was too large. In the two years since, nearly two thousand homes have been built in the parish.

All in all, Very Reverend Father, we owe a deep gratitude to Divine Providence for all it has done for the residence in Chicago. We have been blessed in an extraordinary manner in all our enterprises for the glory of the good God and the welfare of souls. I am astonished and my heart is filled with gratitude to the good God who has employed the services of even such a poor sinner as myself to do all these things in so little time for the salvation of the dear souls redeemed by the blood of His Son. And if I had been more faithful to His grace I should have done more. That thought fills me with regret and fear. But our Heavenly Father is always merciful, and so I hope for pardon and shall try to do better in the future.

Your Reverence is not unaware of the fact that all we have in Chicago has been bought and built by the alms of the faithful—a property which is worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Would you kindly answer the following question: Are those who have contributed to the building of our houses, our church and schools, and who maintain their upkeep, to have part in the prayers and in the Masses we celebrate each month according to our rules, even those who have given little, but according to their means? Father Druyts, then Provincial, and Father Fillier, Superior of the Mission of New York, have told

me this and I have promised it to all who have given us alms.

I commend myself to your prayers and I am in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Your most obedient son,

A. DAMEN, S.J.

We thus find Damen in the rather humorous situation of being criticized contrariwise for parsimoniousness on the one side and for extravagance on the other —not an uncommon experience for anyone who attempts a great and original work. Both criticisms evidently were based on the partial views of minds that, as Damen mildly says, were 'not conversant with affairs in Chicago.' The obvious inference to be drawn from the two opposite criticisms is that the truth lies in between them and that Damen was simply a man who did what any normal man must do who acts wisely, namely, tighten up in some circumstances and go full speed in others.

The completion of the church brought on what Father Damen had anticipated, a great inrush of new settlers into the district, so that within a few years two thousand families were added to the parish. Together with these came a multitude of others for reasons of business and employment. There was room for all on the wide prairie which soon began to be dotted with thickening clusters of homes. Among those who came in large numbers were emigrants from Germany, very many of whom were devout Catholics. By 1860 these were estimated at about six thousand, most of them but recently arrived. As a consequence they were handicapped by their inability to speak English and, thus isolated, they gathered into a separate group of their own countrymen. They built their own church and established a German parish. However, they suffered from the friction that attends all beginnings. It is unnecessary to go into the details of these difficulties,

more than to state the fact that they finally became so complicated that they reached an *impasse* and the church was placed under interdict.

Many of these Catholics began to attend the Lutheran church. Busy as Damen was with church and school work and with the missions he gave during lulls in the work, he nevertheless could not look at this situation without turning to relieve it. His solution of the difficulty was to have a priest who spoke German brought in from outside the diocese, who would come in as a stranger without any possible prejudices, reopen the church and rescue the congregation. He had already presented the case to the Provincial before the following letter of December 20, 1859.

Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial:

This afternoon I returned from Indianapolis where the mission has been blessed with most extraordinary success. The pastor did not expect more than five hundred Communions, as this was the largest number he ever had in any previous mission. To his great consolation he had at this more than one thousand Communions. About eighty persons from twenty to forty years of age made their First Communion. Many others who had not been to church for years, nor been inside the church before the mission, made their peace with God. Seven Protestants were received into the Church and more will follow the example of these. We gave the scapular to three hundred and fifty persons and more were anxious to receive it, but we had no more. I established a Sodality for men. Sixty-seven men were received and made the solemn act of consecration in the sanctuary before the congregation. Some of these men are the leading men of the city. Some have been with the Odd Fellows, Sons of Malta, and so on.

Tomorrow I will see the Bishop, and will ascertain when the German Father will be required here. I hope that your Reverence will not think of refusing this offer. There is no occasion of speaking to the Visitor about this matter since it is nothing new, but merely strengthening

an old establishment. If this request is not granted the consequence will be that many of the Germans will fall into infidelity as they have done in Terre Haute, Indianapolis and many other places. This is truly a pressing affair and I beg you for God's sake and for the sake of the salvation of so many souls not to refuse it.

Bishop Luers called on me to give a retreat in his diocese, but I told him I could not till next fall, when I promised to give a retreat in his cathedral. I feel healthy and strong, though I preached three times a day and heard pretty much all the Confessions, as the pastor wished that all should come to me. I heard nearly four hundred general Confessions and of course I had very little sleep.

Your devoted son,

A. DAMEN, S.J.

Affairs went rapidly to a crisis in this parish, so that Damen judged immediate action necessary. In his next letter to the Provincial he says:

I have told the Bishop that we will take the German congregation of the west side. I have taken this upon myself, and scold me if you think I deserve it. But I think that neither the glory of God nor the good of souls nor the peace and happiness of our present congregation would permit refusal of the offer. The German congregation have given the Bishop a great deal of trouble, their church is at present interdicted, many of the people are going to the Lutheran church, others are turning infidels, but yet they all have a kind of confidence in us. Let Father Neiderkorn come here for two or three weeks to arrange matters. I will direct him and will be with him in all the transactions necessary. All these people must be saved to God and if you do not do this all will go to the devil. It is at the Bishop's request I write to your Reverence and he tells me that he will be forever thankful to your Reverence if you will let Father Neiderkorn come here for a couple of weeks. Remove this scandal as it is in your power to do so. Could I speak German fluently, I would undertake the work, settle all the difficulties, remove the scandal and make them submissive to our good

and kind Bishop. But I have so much difficulty in expressing myself properly in matters not familiar to me. . . . For God's sake do not refuse this little service and let Father Neiderkorn come at once, because I must leave here on the ninth of January, 1860.

Damen thus found himself with a strayed parish on his hands and nobody to take care of it. His strong appeal for Father Neiderkorn is another instance of his ability to judge men. Father Neiderkorn was then a novice, having entered the Society as a priest. Damen could not have known him at all intimately, yet he chose him for this delicate work of reviving a rebellious parish. His judgment was justified by the fact that four years later Father Neiderkorn came to Chicago and for years superintended the whole work of the Holy Family parish whenever Father Damen was away giving missions, which meant a considerable portion of the year.

The General, in this case, would not allow Father Damen to assume the responsibility of another parish. He wrote that he could not sanction too much spreading out of work with the small number of men in hand. He did not forbid him to co-operate in smoothing out the trouble. And this Damen did with such effect that the parish regained its spiritual health and grew into the prosperous congregation of St. Francis of Assisi, for some years the largest German parish in the city.

This experience of Damen with a single case opened his view to the danger of leakage from the faith throughout the country. Other cases like this one could, he reasoned, occur anywhere and at any time. He realized then a fact that is only too often feebly realized, how deep-rooted a difficulty it is for older people to change their language. Especially in the things of religion, where the old prayers and long familiar exercises of devotion in the mother tongue have become a part of their lives, it is most trying to reverse

the current and force it to dig out a new channel for itself. It irritates anyone to be compelled to do a thing awkwardly which he could do gracefully if allowed to have his own way of doing it. It is like asking him to do with his left hand what all his life he has been doing with his right. Hence the instinct among those similarly placed to keep by themselves and to follow their familiar ways. And in the matter of public religious worship, if they cannot have that way, they may refuse to adopt any other, and leave the open practice of their faith altogether. This is a problem which the Catholic Church has had to face time after time with the different nationalities emigrating to the United States. In the beginning it is imperative to have pastors who understand their temperament and know their language. Otherwise, as Damen said, a heavy percentage of losses from the Church is certain. Later on, as we have since experienced, another difficulty was to enter with the first generation of American children of foreign-born parents. The first-comers see that it is their mother tongue that has enabled them to keep their religion intact. They are inclined then to reason that it must be the same mother tongue which will keep the religion of their children safe. But the mother tongue of the children is English and now it is equally dangerous to them as it was formerly to their parents, to be without their mother tongue in their religious life. They become isolated, not only religiously, but socially and financially as well. I recall during the War, meeting many boys born and raised almost to manhood in America, who remained away from Confession until the very day of their overseas departure, for the only reason that they had been trained to confess in a foreign language and thought they could not confess in English. The near approach of danger brought them to the English-speaking priest and they were greatly

relieved to find that they could easily go to Confession in their mother tongue.

This development of the original difficulty, however, had not shown itself at the time Damen was working to save the first-comers. This had to be done immediately, he saw, or there would be no second generation of Catholics. He would solve the problem by having the General of the Society send German Jesuits to America. The following letter was written in 1860:

Very Reverend Father General:

It would be a great pleasure for me to write to your Paternity to inform you of all that has taken place in Chicago since my last letter, and of the abundant fruits that have followed the missions I have had the happiness to give. Overwhelmed with business at present, however, I am compelled to keep this for a later time. Today I must write about something most important for the salvation of souls and the glory of God.

Our good Bishop has offered us a German community here which he desires should be turned into a good parish. One German Father would be enough, or at most two. These Fathers could live in the same house with us, as the German community is quite near our own, or rather they are in the midst of us. We take charge of those among them who are able to speak English. The German Fathers would attend to those who speak nothing but German. Reverend Father Provincial and other Fathers think that we should accept this offer, but they await your approbation. It is to urge your Paternity to give this approbation that I write.

One German church in this city, a congregation of some six thousand souls, is now closed. I shall not give the history of these troubles, for it would take too long. But with their church closed and without any priest, the whole congregation will be lost if something is not done for them.

I pray, I beg your Paternity, for the love of God and for the salvation of souls, first, that you write immediately to the Father Provincial of Germany that he may send a

German Father to our house in Chicago to take care of the German portion of our flock; and second, that you send a few German Fathers to our province. There is urgent need for this. If this is not done immediately thousands of souls will be lost for eternity. O, how many Fathers are there in Germany who have little to do and who could be profitably employed here. Will not your Paternity be touched with compassion and mercy for so many souls redeemed by the blood of the God-Man and over whom hell is triumphing to the great dishonor of God and the sorrow of any good priest and Christian?

Write therefore, dear Father, write to the German Provincial to send a few capable Fathers, a few good preachers who would be able to give missions and retreats. Father Weninger has done much and is still doing a great deal. But he is the only one, it can be said, for the entire territory of North America. Would to God that we had a dozen like him.

Again, my dear Father, I beg you through the blood of Jesus Christ, do not refuse my request. If you agree to it I will promise that, with the divine help, wonderful fruit shall be the outcome.

I cannot close this letter. It seems to me that I have not urged the matter sufficiently. But I hope everything from the goodness of God and of the Blessed Virgin to whom I have just recommended this whole affair.

CHAPTER XII

DAMEN FACES THE SCHOOL PROBLEM

'THE greatest religious fact in the United States today,' writes Archbishop Spalding, 'is the Catholic School system, maintained without any aid by the people who love it.' The system, as it stands today, is the flowering of a growth that has advanced from humble beginnings and through many difficulties for three hundred years. The very first schools of any kind in the present territory of the United States were the schools founded about 1600 in the Spanish colonies. The French colonies likewise had their schools, and both colonies regarded them as an integral part of their work of civilization and supported them as such. The English colonies, from a like motive, supported denominational education, though for Catholics it depended on local conditions whether they could or could not secure their share of the public funds. When the States adopted their constitutions, no change was made, and in theory the Catholic schools today have the logical right to recompense for the expense they incur in the teaching they are doing for the state. But the gradual rise of dissentient religious bodies in the country, with its attendant friction and discord, resulted finally in the establishment of the 'non-sectarian' schools now recognized in practice and supported by the state. To the Catholic ideal, this compromise on no religion of any kind in the schools, is fatal, and today in the United States, great numbers of non-Catholics are expressing themselves as in accord with this ideal. Ex-President Coolidge, in one of his presidential addresses, said:

Unless our halls of learning are real temples which are to be approached by our youth in a spirit of reverence, consecrated by worship of the truth, they will all end in a delusion. The information that is acquired in them will simply provide a greater capacity for evil. Our institutions of learning must be dedicated to a higher purpose. The life of our nation must rise to a higher realm.

Words like these, in even more emphatic form, are being echoed by hundreds of sincere men who fear the results to the country of a system of education which deliberately excludes religion from its schools. And Catholics will never believe that they can be good citizens, let alone good men, without their religion to support them.

After various attempts to obtain state aid for their schools, in Detroit, in Lowell, in New York, which were frustrated in each case by waves of angry bigotry, Catholics became convinced that if they wished to have the schools that were best for them and the country, they would have to build them themselves. The Know-Nothing movement of the 'fifties was the last argument that drove them to this conclusion. Since that time they have developed a school system that cost them probably two hundred million dollars to install, with an annual overhead expense of twenty-five millions.

It was exactly at this pivotal moment of the beginning of Catholic school expansion that Damen had come on the scene in Chicago. Within a single year after the founding of the Holy Family parish, he was facing the Catholic school problem in a more complex form, perhaps, than any that has since arisen. Thousands of children were crowding all about him, looking for schools. He had one small wooden building, no teachers and no money. Today our school building grows up alongside our church, as a necessary adjunct.

We consider a parish somehow incomplete without its Catholic school.

In the early 'sixties this idea was not so clear in the Catholic mind. A parish with a school was the exception. Catholics had not thoroughly waked up to the danger of a non-religious school. And even when they realized the danger, they had no money. Damen found himself standing empty-handed before two thousand children whose education he knew he was responsible for. To buy land, to put up buildings, to secure teachers and with no visible resources to draw upon—this was the next problem he had to solve. It might be thought that after the heavy strain of assembling and organizing the parish and of building the church, Damen might now repose on the work accomplished, and leave the schools to be built by others later on. Besides, the parish was drained of money. It seemed impossible to go ahead so soon again after building the big church, and begin another drive for more money. But, in spite of all this, Damen was determined to go on and see the school problem through. He saw, as clearly as any man in America ever saw, that the parish without its Catholic school is crippled, that the faith would die out in a generation or two if the young were not firmly set in it. He was not a man of half measures, either for the present or the future. He saw the school problem steadily and saw it whole. And he planned not a school, but a complete system of grade schools, a high school and a college. When first he took up the work of providing education for his flock there was but one Catholic school on the entire west side of Chicago—St. Patrick's, teaching some hundreds of children in the grades. The old Foster school was the single public school within the parish confines. That was all for a population that kept swarming into the district, bringing large families with them.

Damen began with two wooden wings built, transept-

like, off the church. He did the best he could with this until the new church was finished. After that he used the old church for classrooms. This carried him along, though the building bulged with children, until 1864. In May of that year the school burned down. The basement of the large church was hurriedly fitted up for schoolrooms, and classes went ahead. Shortly after the burning of the school, Father Coppens met Mr. Onahan, one of the earliest prominent members of the parish. Father Coppens said it was too bad that Father Damen had lost his school. Mr. Onahan said:

'Don't pity Father Damen. Pity us. We'll have to get busy now and build a real school this time. Father Damen will have us at that right away.'

Mr. Onahan was correct. The new school was of course an imperative need and Father Damen and his helpers started out without delay to provide it. Once more the parish was called into the breach. They responded so well, that in two months the cornerstone of the new building was laid and in eight months, January, 1865, it was ready for occupancy. This was the first complete Catholic school in Chicago, the equal of any public school of the period, with dimensions of one hundred and twenty-five by sixty-five feet and a height of eighty feet, well lighted and set in the center of a wide open space with ample playground room about it. Two thousand pupils could be accommodated in it. Its cost was a large sum for that day, seventy-five thousand dollars.

When we recall that the Civil War was then at its height and had been raging for three years previous, we shall better grasp what seventy-five thousand dollars meant. The parish had been steadily losing its men, families were stinted, strained for support, money was scarce, the thoughts and the interests of the people were hovering over the distant battlefields. It was an uncertain and perilous time. Nevertheless, the vigor

of Damen's driving power was enough to overcome every handicap. In spite of the war, he fixed the parish mind so steadily upon the prime necessity of a school for their children that he drew them along with him, without a break, until the finish. How they got the money together to pay for it, old parishioners used to say, they never could explain. The pinch of the Civil War had them down to their last dime, they thought, but whenever Damen appealed for funds, they always seemed to find another dime under that one. It was like the widow's cruse. When the huge school, completed, rose before them after only eight months of campaigning, they used to stand looking at it and wondering how they did it.

It would appear that Damen and the parish traveled farthest when they traveled lightest. They had built a big church plant during a panic; they put up their biggest school during a civil war. After these two experiences, they were hardy veterans, and were convinced that with Damen to lead them they could face any situation and win through. This first school was the Holy Family School *par excellence,* the oldest child in the future family of schools, and its younger brothers and sisters always recognized its historic precedence. It was exclusively for boys and it became known as the 'Brothers' School,' from the fact that two Jesuit Brothers, Martin Corcoran, S.J., and Thomas O'Neil, S.J., were the first teachers there. Just at this tide in the affairs of the parish, Damen secured the services of the Reverend Andrew O'Neil, brother of Thomas, and appointed him head of the schools of the parish. Father O'Neil was perhaps as fine an organizer and director of schools as the last century has seen. From the moment he took charge of the Holy Family School, and for thirty-five years after, it was a furnace of energy. Fife and drum corps, brass bands, cadets and Zouaves, poured out of the place, indicating their fiery

reaction to the Civil War; ball teams, picnics, skating parties in the winter on the thick unbroken ice of the river or away across the wide frozen prairies to the west; in the summer, bands of swimmers hiking to the lake and playing like dolphins for the whole day in the water; and, we shudder to relate, other bands, not appreciating a hike, stopping at the river and plunging in there. Also, to be strictly historical, we only partially regret to say that there were fights, perhaps plenty of them. Very likely it did not surprise the educator then as it does the modern uplifter to perceive that, after all, boys fight. And at that, the youngsters were only doing at intervals with their fists what a large portion of the grown-ups had been doing for five years continuously with rifles. At any rate, these are the traditions that float down to us from the old-timers, told for the most part with chuckles of glee and with a hidden yearning—one can feel it, listening to the telling—that they should like to be back there and do it all over again.

But if there was play outside the school, within it there was work. Those were the days when boys took books home from school to study them at night under the kerosene lamp. We have triumphantly emancipated ourselves from the crude notions of that prehistoric age; we have thrown out the kerosene lamp, and the books and home study with it. But at that time it was not considered cruel to let a boy use his arms and legs most of the day and then to insist that he use his brain for a part of the night. We had not evolved into the 'movie' period as yet. Child study, in the days of real sport, did not mean perspective lorgnette observation of a youngster, with the object of statistically discovering how a maximum of shredded information could be injected into its system with a minimum of receptive effort. Child study simply meant that the child had to study and that was all there was to it, unless Billy

wanted to feel the rod, which was the chief method of administering calories in Billy's day. It wasn't thought possible then to inhale education like cigarettes. The idea of carrying on a school without home study was in that day considered ridiculous. Billy could take his choice between digesting the books or the birch. Most of the time he chose the books. It is probably a little better luck, after all, to be whipped by the school principal while it's early, than to be pursued by the police when it's entirely too late.

The writer has met many men in many parts of the United States who were trained in the Holy Family School, and it always has been clear to him that they regard it with admiration and affection. The detailed memories they retain of the staff and of their schoolmates, touched with a humor that warms every story they tell, indicate that an impression was made on their young souls that age cannot wither nor custom stale. The *History of the Holy Family Parish* sums up in a brief and modest paragraph the work of that school:

> At the present time there are to be found many men, some old, some middle-aged, some even youthful, who look back with pride and satisfaction to their school-boy days in the old 'Brothers' School.' These may be met in every state in the Union and in almost every country under the sun, from the diamond fields of Africa to the gold fields of Alaska. They will be found in every walk of civil life, frequently holding very responsible positions—presidents of a railroad or telegraph system, doctors, lawyers, judges—indeed in all vocations, the ecclesiastical and religious states being well represented.

That religion was indeed a very strong feature of their school life may be taken from the single fact that the parish acolythical society, perhaps the finest that ever Chicago has seen, whether for numbers or discipline, was recruited altogether from these apparently

harum-scarum boys who tumbled about in the lake, and even in the river, yelled themselves hoarse at ball games, and when the solemn code of boy honor demanded it, punched each other with their fists. However they may have deviated from the rigid prescription of meticulous etiquette, in the two big essentials of character they all bore a striking family resemblance to their pastor—in their energy and their faith.

We have said that a characteristic of Father Damen's attitude toward those who worked with him was that when any department was going well under the leadership of the head he had appointed, he never interfered with its operation, but always encouraged it to keep on in its forward course. Father Andrew O'Neil, the head of the schools, was one whom Damen absolutely trusted. Under his management the schools, one after another, as they were established in various parts of the parish, became not only efficient from the study point of view, but a family feeling was fostered among them that made them harmonize like one big school. This sense of solidarity naturally extended itself to the parents, so that the schools added not a little to the creation of unity in the parish. How this worked out in practice may be inferred from a single example.

The Sunday School Association gave two entertainments every year, usually on the successive nights of March seventeenth and eighteenth. In these, all the schools took part, each giving one or more numbers, and the evening concluded with a short play given by the boys. The school hall was very large, with a gallery, but it was not large enough to hold the crowds that came to that entertainment. Fire laws in Chicago then were not what they are now, and when the curtain went up for the first number, the hall, gallery, aisles, vestibules and stairs were packed to the last foot with people, everyone knowing everybody else and all

forgetting the discomfort of the jam in their interest in the show. A typical holiday gathering, brimming with good nature.

Just before the play went on, Father O'Neil would range some of the school classes on the stage and proceed to show the parents how well their children knew the catechism and Bible History. Father O'Neil, out in the audience, quizzed them hither and yon from matter all over the book. He was a skillful questioner, not seeking to puzzle the child, but to get clear, intelligent answers. After they had answered beautifully and were well in their stride, the parents swelling with conscious pride at the way their Johnny or Mary had answered the hard questions of the priest, Father O'Neil, himself beaming with delight, would step to the footlights and challenge the visiting clergy, mostly the Fathers of the parish, to try to catch any of them. The Fathers always accepted the challenge. The audience went on tiptoe. The results were not always according to schedule, at least Father O'Neil's schedule. On one occasion he was examining the children in Bible History, and at what he judged the psychological moment, he flourished his challenge. One of the Fathers immediately took it up and, selecting a small girl from the group, asked:

'Mary, who swallowed the whale?'

'Jonas,' Mary called out in excitement.

The roar that went up from the house completely drowned Father O'Neil's protests. All he could do was to wave his hands at them.

The next question was, 'How many Gods are there?'

'There is three Gods.' Another storm of merriment.

'How many Persons in God?'

'There are three Persons in God,' answered Mary, recovering a little.

'Which is the true Church?'

'The Holy Family Church,' said Mary, again running off the rails.

'Who baptized you?'

'Father Setters.' Father Setters was almost the official administrator of baptism in the parish, and a great favorite. The answer naturally brought out more cheering, particularly from the gallery, crowded with young boys who had all been baptized by Father Setters.

'Where will the good people go when they die?'

'To heaven,' said Mary.

'Where will those in the gallery go?'

'To hell,' said Mary, who was all set for the question about the 'wicked' people.

This answer broke everything up. Father O'Neil, who was himself a wit, had to acknowledge he was beaten. And the play which followed had a hard time getting started across the footlights.

After the Holy Family School, the next one was organized by the Religious of the Sacred Heart. As soon as Bishop O'Regan had secured Father Damen and the Jesuits for the diocese, he requested his aid in the further expansion of Catholicism in Chicago. He wrote to Damen as follows:

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, March 21, 1857.

Reverend dear Friend:

. . . I have now another trouble to give you. I want to bring the Ladies of the Sacred Heart to Chicago and I want this to be done this summer. I will give all the patronage in my power, and this is the only aid I can give, but at present this patronage is money or its worth. It stands thus: The Sisters of Mercy are to give up their boarding school this summer and to convert that house into a hospital. They now have forty-six boarders or more, and all these at once would pass into the school of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, with many others, I am sure. . . .

Do, dear Father and friend, complete the good work you have begun. Use all your influence to have this effected, as now is the fitting time. Property can be had not far from your church and in three months a house can be finished conveniently. When opened it will be filled —it will be a transfer here from one house to another. I write today to Madame Gallwey, and through God and His Virgin Mother, I implore success for this good and holy project. I depend very much on you. Write soon and work for the Sacred Heart's sake.

Yours very affectionately,
RT. REV. ANTONY O'REGAN,
Bishop of Chicago.

This was the beginning of a correspondence through which Father Damen brought to Chicago, in 1858, Madame Gallwey and ten other of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, to found their first Community in Chicago. They resided at first outside the parish, on Wabash Avenue. A little later they rented the mansion of W. S. Johnston, with its grounds at Rush and Illinois Streets, and erected there a large frame building which they used as a school. Their idea was ultimately to get to the west side for their permanent home and within a few years they had acquired twelve acres of land on Taylor Street and built a convent there which they occupied first on August 20, 1860.

Transplanting a school in that day was rather a more complicated matter than we would make of it today, when we can almost send things by radio. Bad streets, when there were any streets at all, together with primitive moving equipment, made transportation an occasion for practicing virtue. Father Damen was close to the work, however. He called for volunteers, and shortly thereafter a long procession of every variety of vehicle that could be drawn by horses was seen winding slowly o'er the lea in the direction of Rush and Illinois Streets. Drays, trucks, wagons of all shapes, sizes and

colors bumped and wiggled their way across the billowy prairie, and returned jubilantly with all the convent household fixtures aboard. And for the next few days, while the nuns were busy setting their home in order, kind neighbors relieved them of the problem of cooking by sending in abundant table supplies.

Their household goods safe in port, the next thing was to retrieve their school, the frame building which they had left over on the Johnston block. How were they to get that across the prairie? Nothing simpler to the inventive Chicago mind. Without drawing a nail or disturbing a board, the contractor moved the building down to the river's edge, loaded it on a mud scow, floated it gently down the stream to Taylor Street and sent it west across that street to its destination. The first parochial school exclusively for the Holy Family girls had arrived.

Four years later the nuns started an academy and boarding school, under the title *The Seminary of the Sacred Heart,* thus being among the first teachers in Chicago who opened the way systematically to the higher education of Catholic girls. The academy in a short time won a high reputation for thoroughness of training and in its day graduated many of Chicago's distinguished women. The parochial school, too, was continuously successful and grew until it registered a thousand pupils.

The Religious of the Sacred Heart conducted their schools in the parish for forty-seven years. Although they did, and still do, sterling work in parish schools whenever circumstances demand it, yet their specific vocation lies in academy and college teaching. By the end of their career in the Holy Family parish an entirely new, and largely non-Catholic population had filled the old district and their opportunity for training in higher studies automatically ceased. 'Very reluctantly,' says the *History of the Holy Family Parish,*

'they gave up the home they loved so well and the people in whose midst they had labored for half a century. It was with anguish of soul that the thousands of friends they had made during so many years, saw these nuns depart, never to return. The great influx of a new population caused the older residents to seek homes in other parts of the city, so they had no alternative but to depart, although with sorrow.'

Their present college at Lake Forest is a continuation of the old Seminary of the Sacred Heart opened under Father Damen's care in 1860. In connection with the original Convent of the Sacred Heart, an interesting historical note was sent by Mother Sheridan. It informs us that the first religious procession, not only in the Holy Family parish, but in the city of Chicago, had its terminus at this Convent and here, also, the first open-air Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given in 1861.

The entrance to the Convent [Mother Sheridan wrote] was then very high from the ground to the doorway. Taylor Street had not yet been graded and that part of the west side was often under water. From the corner of Eleventh and May Streets west and north was an open prairie, not a house within the area.

The procession was made up of the Sodalities, wearing no distinguishing dress, except for the newly formed St. Ann's (later the Married Ladies) Sodality. These wore black veils. The girls of the Sacred Heart parish school were in white. There were no banners, no band, but there was lively faith and fervent devotion.

The line of march was along May street to Taylor and west on Taylor to the convent. An altar had been erected and decorated in the vestibule of the convent and the convent pupils, in white and wearing white veils, knelt on the front steps. As the procession halted and the Blessed Sacrament was placed on the improvised altar, Reverend Father Damen, who had directed all the movements, turned to the mixed crowd of Catholics and non-Catholics

that filled the space on the prairie in front of the convent, and Damen's command: 'Hats off! Kneel down!' rang out.

The spectators, every one of them, knelt on the ground, and there in the prairie, the first open-air Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given.

CHAPTER XIII

A DISCOVERY AND ITS RESULTS

FATHER DAMEN was still besieged by the growing crowds of children trying to enter the schools. There seemed to be no end of them. Lay teachers were engaged in numbers and they proved very efficient. But the supply of such teachers was limited. Moreover, to depend on securing skillful instructors thus picked up by lucky chance was too haphazard a method of conducting a steady system of schools. Some unfailing source of trained teaching must be sought that would meet and supply the continuously increasing demand for more teachers and hold the schools firmly up to a set standard of study. Besides, the strain of numbers was telling. Two schools were already not enough. The stream of applicants for admission threatened to end in many of the children being left out in the street. Father Damen was again back in the position he had been with his first little church—too many people and not enough space. The critical period of the parish education was upon him.

Just at this time, a mission tour took him through the State of Iowa. There he began to observe, in one place and another, the teaching work of a young Community, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, familiarly known now among Catholics as the B.V.M.'s.

The foundation of this Institute was begun in the city of Dublin, but its thorough organization was achieved only after the whole Community had come to the United States and had located their mother house

in Dubuque. They were among the first, if not the very first, of the religious Congregations of women in this country to devote themselves especially to the parish school. At the time Damen first met them, they were entirely occupied in the diocese of Dubuque, establishing schools for young children in the towns of Iowa. Recruited as they were from the ranks of American Catholics, they had the initial advantage of understanding from the first the character of the American child. Excellently trained, too, in the religious life, their uniformity of method, together with what we may call their natural flair for teaching the young, enabled them to obtain remarkable results.

It did not take long for one with Damen's intuition to see that here was exactly the Community he needed for the work in Chicago. Immediately he wrote to the Reverend T. J. Donaghoe, the founder and superior of the Congregation, and asked for the help of the Sisters in the Holy Family parish. At the same time he prepared the way by purchasing a large two-story building on Maxwell Street, originally erected for a chair factory, and fitting it up for school purposes. A rapid-fire correspondence between him and Father Donaghoe brought all details to a satisfactory issue and in midsummer of the same year, 1867, Damen wrote to Father Donaghoe:

The school is nearly ready for your Sisters. We desire very much that three or four Sisters would be here by the twelfth of August to open the school in order to keep the children from the public schools. We have now 1,000 boys in our school and we should have as many girls, whereas we have only seven hundred, but by getting your Sisters we hope this evil will be remedied. We would like to get nine Sisters, but try to send three or four at once, if possible; and let them be good teachers so as to make a good impression, for the first impression is generally the

lasting one. I need not say that I have the approbation of our good Bishop.

Your devoted friend,

A. DAMEN, S. J.

Father Donaghoe wrote to Father Laurent at Muscatine, asking if Sister Mary Agatha could be taken for the Chicago mission without detriment to the Muscatine school. It was a sacrifice for Father Laurent, as she was his mainstay in the school, but he gave a noble answer. He writes:

Your letter, delivered to me by Sister Mary Agatha, surprised me, but it gave me great joy on account of the good news that it announces. I think the mission of our Sisters is going to be revealed to them as it was revealed to those of the Visitation. Our Sisters are called to fill a position which no Order yet was intended for, and that is, teaching our parochial schools, and popularizing Catholicity among the masses. They will not depend any more on one diocese and they will have the Jesuits to guide them, which is saying a great deal. Thus you will be able to say, 'I planted, the Jesuits watered, God has given the increase.' I think you could not make a better choice than Sister Mary Agatha for the new place, and in a few years Chicago will speak for itself.

Yours, etc.,

P. LAURENT.

Early in August, nine Sisters arrived in Chicago, and a few months later two more were sent. On August 19, 1867, St. Aloysius School was opened with five hundred pupils, filling all the rooms, and still leaving an overflow of one hundred and fifty pupils on the outside. Damen had foreseen this possibility also and provided for it with another building on West Eighteenth Street, now St. Stanislaus School. Thither went the exiles from St. Aloysius School with two of the Sisters, and the two schools opened on the same day. Damen had bought a residence for the Sisters on Hal-

sted Street and from this they went each morning to the schools. On September twelfth, less than a month from the date of the first opening of these schools, Father Damen wrote to Father Donaghoe:

I am thankful to God that thus far the work of your good Sisters has been blessed by Divine Providence, although Sister Mary Agatha has been sick all the time. The Sisters have now about seven hundred children. We must hope that we shall be able to build a convent school for them. We have now 2,500 children—boys and girls. Is it not a glorious work to form so many youthful hearts to piety, virtue and religion? The Sisters are good, humble and obedient and work with great zeal. Thanks be to God.

Within two years, Damen had built for them a large convent, with a school building attached for the upper grades and a high school course. And in a short time twelve hundred children were in attendance.

In an article in the *New World* 'The Jesuits in Chicago,' April 14, 1900, Mr. W. J. Onahan says:

The introduction of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. was one of the happiest events for Catholic education in this parish and city. This wonderful Community seemed to possess, from the beginning, a special fitness and aptitude for the task of parochial school work, into which they entered with the greatest ardor and for which the Sisters have demonstrated the highest capability.

Indeed, the Jesuit parochial schools have long been an example and an incentive for the other parochial schools of the city. They would not suffer, it is safe to say, by comparison in any particular with schools of the highest rank anywhere, whether public or parochial.

Today in Chicago, a generation after the above was written, it would be difficult to maintain that any one parish school is in the lead of any other. The organization of the Chicago Catholic school system has so broadened and advanced, the teaching personnel has been so thoroughly trained and the general supervision

of the whole field so well sustained, that I believe it is now safe to say of the Chicago parish schools *en masse* what was claimed for the Jesuit schools of fifty years ago. They do not yield in general efficiency to any schools anywhere.

We should not be historically just, however, did we not record that Father Damen and his helpers were the pioneers in this field of systematic organization, not only for Chicago but for the entire United States.

This school campaign of Damen gives us another characteristic instance of his insight, vigorous resolution and quick and decisive action. The whole business of selecting his teachers, securing two schools and a Sisters' residence, and starting seven hundred children into their grade studies, was accomplished in five months. His first letter on the subject was written at the end of February and everything was in running order shortly after the middle of August.

To Damen also must be given the credit of opening the first great channel for the energies of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They were a tiny stream in the Dubuque diocese. With their coming to Chicago, they broadened into a great river. This movement, too, crystallized for them their specific vocation, in the words of Father Laurent, 'to fill a position which no Order was yet intended for, teaching in our parochial schools and popularizing Catholicity among the masses.' This foundation work, all genuine educators insist, is the most vitally important in the entire field of education.

The demand for more schools continued. In 1872, St. Veronica's School, now St. Pius', was built, on Ashland Avenue near Twenty-second Street. The Guardian Angel School, on Forquer Street, followed in 1875. The year 1877 again saw two schools come in, St. Joseph's on West Thirteenth, and St. Agnes', on Morgan Street, a total of eight schools built and put

into operation in seventeen years, with a roll call of approximately five thousand children, the largest single parish school attendance in the world. Able co-operation certainly accounts for the perfection of this growth and again, as in previous cases, Father Damen secured this by the choice of a capable leader in Mother Mary Agatha Hurley, whose work he had observed for the first time in Muscatine. As these schools sprang up one after another, the parishioners provided the funds for the buildings and the Sisters kept supplying strong staffs of teachers. God rewarded the generosity of both. The parish became a nursery for religious vocations. In 1922 an effort was made to ascertain the number entering the Religious Orders of women, and the list, which the compilers state is not complete, gives the names of four hundred and fourteen persons, of whom two hundred and fifty-two became members of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Such an educational enterprise, training from four to five thousand children annually, could not escape public notice. It became news for the press. In 1876, the Chicago *Post and Mail* published a review of the Catholic schools of the city, basing the article upon the Holy Family system. It says in part:

> Though differing from the common schools in many details, yet these very differences form, not merely an interesting field of study, but one pregnant with suggestions of improvement in the public school system, now so boasted of by educational men.
>
> These schools are not strictly free, and yet no one, by reason of poverty is debarred from the educational privileges there afforded. The children of parents whose pocket-books are of ordinary length, are taxed from fifty cents to a dollar a month, according to the studies taught them. Children whose parents are not able to shoulder this tax, are allowed to pursue their studies side by side with the others and are charged no tuition. Nor is this

lack of means allowed to humiliate the poorer children, as no distinction is made between the two classes, and the Brother having charge of the office finances is supposed to be the only one who knows whether a pupil pays tuition or not.

The course of study is generally such as will give the student a thorough mastery of all the branches as taught in the graded schools, with the addition of a complete course in bookkeeping, and commercial forms and law for the boys and instruction in needle work for the girls. Considerable attention is also paid to music, both vocal and instrumental. Of course, as is well understood, much attention is paid to religious instruction, Bible History being quite a prominent feature of this part of the course, and the knowledge of sacred history possessed by some of the younger pupils would put to shame that often displayed by the preachers in the pulpits of other denominations.

When Father Damen opened his first school he was unable to secure for it any teachers from Religious Orders. He engaged lay teachers, therefore, for this school. What was at first a doubtful experiment, turned to so fortunate a success that even when the opportunity for a change came, he kept to the original plan. For thirty years, these teachers, seventy-five all told, under the direction of Father and Brother O'Neil, formed the staff of the Holy Family school. They were all Catholics, they loved teaching, and they had caught from Father Damen the apostolic idea of spreading the Gospel through education. And the boys who were trained by them, now men well on in years, as they ramble back in memory through the lights and shadows of their school days, still affectionately recall the names of their teachers in the 'Brothers' School.'

Among these teachers, perhaps the most distinguished was Mr. Michael Carmody, one of the very last of the Irish schoolmasters who helped to make history in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries. The *History of the Holy Family Parish* describes him as follows:

> Mr. Carmody was a man of exceptional talent and was closely connected with all the school work of the parish for twenty-five years. He endeared himself especially to all the boys, even though he was a strict disciplinarian, for he was always just.
>
> During those twenty-five years, Mr. Carmody lived in the school building and there raised his family of four sons and three daughters; and, despite the many annoyances incident to his position, was of such a disposition as apparently to soar above them.
>
> Many men yet living bear witness to his ability as a teacher. His intimates and acquaintances pronounced him the most agreeable of companions. He could converse with bishop, priest and statesman on topics familiar to their station and turn to a child or a school boy and entertain him with conversation within his comprehension. He was a welcome guest everywhere he went and the chosen companion of Father O'Neil and Brother O'Neil on their vacations and excursions.

It would be difficult, we think, to duplicate that type of man today, or to reproduce that group of teachers.

Although these five thousand children were thus distributed under the care of three distinct teaching bodies, namely, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of Charity and the association of lay teachers, the *esprit de corps* was perfect. Father Damen gave equal attention and equal encouragement to all. Not the least semblance of friction developed. On the contrary, the most cordial co-operation prevailed. Whenever the opportunity arrived of their coming together in their entertainments, picnics, church gatherings, they mingled freely and fraternally, with no artificial lines of cleavage visible at any point.

The children thus grew up together, knowing each other intimately, ignorant of the snobbery of caste, and

unconsciously learning to know themselves through the steady mutual attrition of character that children instinctively know so well how to bring into action when moving freely together. They played and prayed and studied and, when affairs of state demanded, fought together, and so laid the basis of friendships that after years proved enduring. Among the families of the parish there were not many cases of the 'only child,' and so the 'spoiled child' and the 'pet' were rather of rare occurrence.

Altogether they were a red-blooded, swift-moving, hardy, carefree little army who learned how to travel together and to be independent individually at the same time—the ideal prospect for future valuable citizens. Among their accomplishments was that of studying well. We have records of their annual closing exercises, which occupied a full week, school by school. Here is a summing up of one of them that may be taken as a sample.

The week for the closing exercises of the six parochial schools of the Holy Family Parish was indeed a busy one and full of agreeable excitement. Two hundred and fifty to three hundred pupils took part in some of the exhibitions. The exercises consisted of dramas, dialogues, farces, declamations and concert recitations, mimic and cadet drill, vocal and instrumental music, tableaux and calisthenic performances. . . .

The medal for good conduct was awarded to James Dwyer. The medal for Christian Doctrine, merited by sixty-eight pupils, fell by lot to Joseph Johnson. The medal for Church History, merited by twenty-two, fell by lot to John Stafford. The medal for United States History, merited by thirty-nine, fell by lot to John Keefe. The medal for geography, merited by fifty-three pupils, fell by lot to Garret Fitzgerald. The medal for Arithmetic, merited by forty-one pupils, fell by lot to John Pierce. The medal for Grammar fell by lot to David Leahy.

There were medals for reading and for drawing. In those days good reading was considered an art. Thirty-nine received medals for perfect attendance throughout the year. Yet, in spite of the remarkable proficiency of such a large number of youngsters in so many branches, only four were judged up to the school standard for constant application to study. And only one was mentioned as meriting the medal for good conduct. Those schools evidently meant something when they asked for behavior and study.

To the present-day observer it may seem strange that so many were tied for honors in the different branches. But it does not seem at all strange to anyone who was there. The present writer, who went through a school taught on similar lines, can testify to its entire possibility. The way in which the boys of that day in Chicago could recite *verbatim* whole pages of history, parse the most tangled sentences, read intelligently, spot the most recondite towns on the map and tear through arithmetic sums, would drive the average 'grader' of today to despair. Oral tests were the order of the day, and the instant the unfortunate reciter dropped the smallest stitch in his performance, fifty hands went up and fifty young minds viciously pounced like vultures on the dead spot. The intensity and the speed of those early days of Chicago now seem like a dream. But it was a fact then. The birch certainly had something to do with it, and I sometimes wonder if it is not possible today to introduce its substitute, some form of robot, say, that will swing the rod at the psychological moment, and thus obtain the old results, while sparing the feelings of the sociological parent.

The children of the parish were not allowed, either, selfishly to suppose that they were a world unto themselves. They were taught to reach abroad in their activities and to realize that they formed but a part of

a larger community, whose needs they must learn to consider. As a practical example of this idea, we mention the training they received in aiding the poor. Perhaps the earliest instance of a children's drive for the orphans is to be found in the Holy Family parish. An annual feature of the school activities was the reception given by the Holy Family children to the orphans, on December twenty-eighth, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. We give a description of one of these receptions taken from the *Church Calendar* of nearly sixty years ago:

The day was beautiful and clear, and about one hundred and eighty of the orphans of St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, in care of the Sisters, set out for Holy Family School. On their arrival they were greeted by music by the Juvenile Band, and at once escorted to the hall of the school. Father O'Neil then came on the stage and in the name of the children and the people of the parish welcomed the orphans and their self-sacrificing guardians. The orphans sang some songs, which were enjoyed by the audience. A little drama was performed by the pupils of the Holy Family School for the entertainment of the orphans. Mother Mary Joseph and one of her assistants then took their places by a table and the children present passed their little donations, and deposited their little bundles of clothing on the tables. There were several grown persons present also, encouraging the little ones by word and example. When this part of the program was completed, which of course was an important part, the orphans were conducted to the smaller hall of the school, where they found an abundance of victuals and two pretty Christmas trees. As soon as they were seated, the young lady teachers of the school supplied them with all they desired, until there was no place left for a piece of cake or candy.

The children's gifts were largely their penny bank savings of the year, in some cases amounting to three hundred pennies, a substantial sum for a child at that

time. The hack drivers and express men of the parish, as their contribution to the cause, brought the orphans to the school and took them home again. There is a healthy naïveté about this ceremonious reception of the orphans with bands playing, and the mutual entertainment with songs and plays, and the formal presentation of gifts that reminds us of the visit of the Magi to Our Lord. The patronizing note of a self-conscious charity is entirely wanting. It was friends giving to friends on terms of a happy equality. Father Damen used to say that he came to the parish an orphan himself and, judging from the treatment he received there, he knew he couldn't bring any orphans to a better place.

A normal outgrowth of the spirit of youth, study and practical piety among the youngsters of the parish was the common love of rollicking fun. It was easy to find companions. The chief asset of the parish was children. They were abroad everywhere and the formality of introductions was superfluous, since everyone knew everyone else. Play was a much more spontaneous thing then than it is in our modern city life, with its congested building, and its sporadic air spaces in the form of playgrounds, where games are strictly officered and timed on a schedule. In the old days, the whole wide prairie was the playground, with magnificent distances stretching on every side, and the lure of woods just beyond the horizon, and inland lakes. It was a real, not an artificial outdoors. The schools caught up the atmosphere of living close to nature, and picnics and excursions were frequent, sometimes given for special groups, as the band and the acolytes, sometimes for the entire school. Wagon loads of provisions were sent ahead and the happy children followed, accompanied by guides and guardians, who were generally the lay teachers of the Holy Family School. They traveled as far as the old horse cars, or

the train, could carry them and walked the rest of it. And after a day of sunshine and sport of all kinds, came the rare enjoyment of the homeward ride, with choruses singing all the popular songs of the day, 'Whish dee a da dee,' 'One More River,' 'Are You There, Jerry Houlihan?' led by the versatile Mr. Carmody, and reaching the climax of the day at Twelfth Street and Blue Island Avenue, where the band turned out and played 'Garry Owen' and the 'Wearing of the Green,' and the large crowd of picnickers, without a cheer leader, gave three cheers and as many 'tigers' as they liked, all but drowning the music of the band.

The mention of Jerry Houlihan's name in a song title recalls a humorous situation that existed between him and the boys of the parish. For Jerry was no fiction. He was a real person, or, more properly, a personage. He was a police officer of the Twelfth Street station, famous all over the city for his ability to catch thieves, and his Captain's picked man wherever courage and action were required. Jerry was very severe on boys who hung about corners, or gathered in groups which looked to him mysterious. He believed strongly in nipping trouble in the bud, and he played no favorites. He would pick up his own son with a crowd of boys and shunt them into the station. No doubt he broke up many a young pirate band and wrecked the best-laid plans of many a carefully arranged fist fight. At any rate, he kept the boys on the run. The present writer, though living at the time in a different part of the city, still remembers with awe the shadow of the mighty name of Jerry Houlihan. The song written about him, and sung everywhere then, was no merely imaginary lyric, although the question in the title 'Are You There, Jerry Houlihan?' needed no answer. Jerry was always and emphatically *there*.

Naturally Jerry incurred the enmity of the boys, who could never see a way to get even with him. But

the band boys found a way. During band practice they learned the tune and one day when Jerry was pacing his beat with all the dignity of the representative of the law, they came down the street in full company, caught up with Jerry, fell into step with him, and, *tutti sforzando,* broke out into 'Are You There, Jerry Houlihan?' Jerry was startled and, perhaps for the first time in his life, taken by surprise. Moreover, he was defenseless. When the lads got to the last three lines of the chorus, they stopped playing, all but a few for an accompaniment, and sang the words:

> And the boys all cry,
> 'Jerry, are you dry?
> Are you there, Jerry Houlihan?'

And all Jerry could do was to keep stepping ahead till he could disappear around the next corner. The old-timers tell us that whenever after this the band boys saw him, no matter what tune they were playing at the time, they would immediately stop and play 'Jerry Houlihan.'

Incidents like these allow us to visualize the general spirit of the young life growing and developing all about under the fostering care of Father Damen. It is clear that such characters could never be cut on a single pattern. There was too much about them that was original, individual. They could be led but not easily driven, and they could never be brought up according to a formula. Direct, personal interest in each was the only method they would respond to, and just this method was the one employed. Even when the rod was used on the intransigents, though apparently a driving force, it was understood finally as a proof, if painful, of this personal interest in getting them to know and to behave. Boys can easily forgive lickings when they know they are fairly deserved. These lads forgave most of theirs. Good at the books, strong in

the faith, kind-hearted, frolic-loving, alert, witty, spiced with mischief, imaginative, fearless and moving always with mercurial speed, they were an ideal community to attract the skillful trainer of youth and to arouse him to his best efforts to bring so promising a sowing to its harvest.

CHAPTER XIV

FOUNDING A COLLEGE

DURING the ten years Father Damen had spent in building his church and schools and in organizing the parish, he had never forgotten what he had said at the beginning of the work, that he would one day reach out further and complete his educational program by founding a college.

As soon as the parish was fairly under way, he represented the prospect to his superiors in St. Louis, and in 1862 the board of consultors at Provincial headquarters decided that 'there ought to be a college in that great city.' By 1866 Damen's preliminary preparations were made and he informed the superiors that he was ready to begin the building. His Provincial consented to this, provided the opinion of the General was favorable. At the same time he laid down another condition, namely, that no extraordinary drive for funds should be attempted by Father Damen.

Advices from the consultors in Chicago delayed the work, however. They could not agree that the time was ripe for opening a college in Chicago, and Father Coosemans, the Provincial, declined to approve the starting of the college at this time.

During the next year, 1867, Father Coosemans was summoned to Rome on business, leaving his assistant, Father Keller, in temporary charge of the Province. Damen saw in Father Keller an aggressive spirit like his own, and once more he vigorously pushed the idea of beginning the college at once. He invited Father Keller to come to Chicago, to observe and study exist-

ing conditions at first hand. Father Keller accordingly came to Chicago, made a careful survey of the situation, agreed that Damen was safe in proceeding and authorized him to go ahead, at the same time writing to the General and explaining how they could meet the cost of building without any danger. The college would be built part at a time, as finances permitted and the number of students demanded.

'I went to Chicago myself,' continues Father Keller, 'to urge on the undertaking, and I marveled at the achievements of our Fathers in that great city; a splendid house of worship, such as one would scarcely expect in America; a parochial school with sixteen hundred boys; schools for girls, one registering four hundred, another nearly that, a third, three hundred, this last a free school conducted by the nuns. The college is the only thing lacking and this will shortly be supplied.'

When Father Coosemans returned from Europe he found the walls of St. Ignatius College already above ground.

St. Ignatius was not the first Catholic college in Chicago. Twenty-five years before, Bishop Quarter, foreseeing, as Damen did, the future greatness of the city, founded the University of St. Mary of the Lake, for college students and seminarians. While this was a move in the right direction, after ten years of effort it proved to be premature. Catholic finances could not then bear the burden. The seed planted by Bishop Quarter did not die, however. Sixty years later, and almost over night, we may say, it came to its full growth in the large Quigley Preparatory Seminary, with nine hundred students, and in the new St. Mary of the Lake at Mundelein, with four hundred in its divinity school.

When Damen came on the scene things had changed. The immense growth of Chicago had made it conscious of its importance and, while still rapidly ex-

panding, it could now afford a breathing spell wherein to consider the higher matter of education. A vastly greater number of Catholics, too, had made Chicago their home, and they had begun to think of how they could give their children the educational opportunities of which themselves had been deprived.

Even with these advantages it is interesting to observe how cautiously Damen proceeded toward his goal of a college for the Catholics of Chicago. All his movements showed a practical sequence. His church came first as the hub of the work, to sustain the faith vitally among his people. Then his primary schools to ground the young generation in their Catholic faith and to give them a thorough elementary training such as would lead them to desire more education. After ten years of this leavening process, he judged the time opportune for the next step, his high school for boys and his college.

With his usual business perspicacity, he had prepared for the financial side of the undertaking, and through those ten years he kept quietly preparing for this expenditure. When the college was completed, the parishioners were surprised, not that Damen had put up another great building—for by this time they had come to believe that was a habit he had—but that their own purses had been touched so lightly in the process. Apparently he had got the money for St. Ignatius College out of the air. He had obeyed his Provincial's injunction not to put on a drive, and yet he had somehow got the money. How had he done it?

From the first, Damen had made up his mind that the parish should not be asked to assume the entire money burden of building the college. Because he considered this undertaking, not as parochial, but as a movement of importance to the entire city. He looked beyond the city, too, and forward to the time, which has come today, when its influence would be felt in a

far wider circle and would draw students from all points of the country. He felt, therefore, and justly, that all this outer territory should invest in its own future and do its part in the foundation of the college. The parish would contribute its share, but would not be asked to shoulder a debt that ought to be supported *pro rata* by others.

He decided therefore to appeal abroad for funds. And he did this successfully through his great popularity on the missions. We recall that after the first early years of the parish, Damen began frequently to give missions throughout the country. After he had things moving smoothly at home, he secured a capable substitute to carry on its routine work along definite lines, and he himself, sometimes alone, sometimes with a companion, went forth to give missions from one end of the country to the other. His great work in Chicago had already become known everywhere, and his extraordinary power as a preacher of missions soon made his name a household word in every Catholic locality he visited. People took a personal interest in the man and his work, and Damen was not the man to allow anyone, from San Francisco to New York, to lose that interest. He kept them in touch with what he was doing, confided to them his plans and got them to realize and sympathize with his difficulties. As a consequence, generous Catholics on all sides were glad to help him, and from the donations he thus received through ten years, he found himself able to purchase the site and to lay the foundations of the college, entirely unencumbered by debt.

So far all was well. But here his cash resources gave out and he was once more facing the problem of borrowing. He was now, indeed, in a much better position for this than ten years back. He had valuable collateral to offer in the parish property, which had increased greatly in value. However, it would take a

hundred thousand dollars to finish the college, a very large sum for that time. Money was dear after the Civil War and the legal rates of interest on loans ranged from ten to twelve per cent. This would mean at least ten thousand dollars yearly to be raised by the parish, and Damen was resolved not to go to the parish except as the last resort. His solution was simple though ingenious. He would borrow the money in Europe, where he could obtain it cheap.

Father Keller strongly urged the General to allow Damen to arrange this loan:

> I see nothing of greater utility [he wrote to Father Beckx], and therefore I urge the building of this college. The hope of the Province almost depends on it. For this college will be the nursery of vocations. From it the other colleges, the novitiate, the missions, will derive power for promoting the glory of God.

Father Coosemans, who at first had opposed the project as untimely, now joins Father Keller in advising it. His letter makes pleasant reading, as showing how undisturbed he was personally at Father Keller's reversal of his first decision during his absence. He reviews the somewhat zigzag course Damen was compelled to follow in order to push the plan ahead.

> Conditions for beginning a college at Chicago [Father Coosemans writes] were very favorable in 1866. The Bishop had then given permission. The affair was referred to your Paternity who agreed and authorized me to give Father Damen approval and permission. I thought with the Chicago consultors that the opportune moment had not arrived. During my absence in Rome, the work was taken in hand with the approval and, from what they tell me, at the instance of Father Keller, who was acting as Vice-Provincial. Father Damen had proposed at first to begin by building only one wing, but Father Keller wished them to build on a larger plan, and to begin with the main section. This entailed a much heavier outlay than

Father Damen had anticipated and made it necessary for him to borrow considerable sums. If I had listened to the advice of Father O'Neil, I would have changed the plans or have work on the building stopped. But after receiving assurances from Father Damen that he saw his way out of the affair with the money they were expecting to obtain from Europe, I gave him permission to go on, the more so as the first story was already built.

I have no doubt that with the help of Heaven both interest and capital will be paid off in due season, provided Father Damen be not taken away.

It is not surprising that conservative minds would be frightened at the debt, huge for that day, that Damen was contracting. But they failed to balance against it his business acumen, his colossal energy and his popularity. They did not know nor appreciate Chicago. Everyone who at all knew Chicago realized that no one held the confidence of the Chicago people as Damen did. Ten years before, Father De Smet, writing to the General, said:

Father Damen has engaged to pay the Vice-Province out of the revenues of his church, fifteen hundred dollars annually in interest for the support of the Scholastics. With another Superior in Chicago I am afraid this engagement would be difficult to keep.

Acting upon the representations of Fathers Coosemans and Keller, the General authorized Damen to proceed with his negotiations for a loan.

One of his companions on the missions was Father Van Goch, like Damen, a Hollander, whose brother was a wealthy business man in Holland. Father Damen requested Father Van Goch to write to his brother to ask if he would supply them with the necessary money at a moderate interest. The reply was that it could be done, but only on condition that they come to Holland for a personal conference. The correspondence between

the brothers finally resulted in the following letter from Damen to the Jesuit General:

CHICAGO, February 10, 1868.

Very Reverend dear Father General:

Since my last letter to your Paternity I have the happiness to assure you that the good God continues to bless our efforts in Chicago, and likewise our work on the missions. In Chicago there are five Fathers for the church who are constantly occupied. They heard seventy thousand Confessions the past year. We have from fifty to sixty thousand Communions a year and at least a hundred conversions from Protestantism to our holy religion. There is great piety in our church, which, large as it is, is nevertheless too small for all who wish to assist at divine services and to hear the sermons. Three thousand children are now in our schools, 1,600 boys and 1,400 girls. . . .

We have begun to build a college, which we intend to be a very large structure. The foundations were laid last fall. This is now a necessity for the youth of Chicago. Reverend Father Provincial has given me permission to borrow one hundred thousand dollars to finish the college.

Now, to borrow the money in this country I shall be obliged to pay ten per cent and perhaps more. This interest is too much and I am not in favor of paying so much. Therefore we have written to Holland to Mr. Van Goch, a very rich man, the brother of Father Van Goch, my companion on the missions. He has replied that if we come to Holland and give him the necessary security, he will give us all the money we need to finish the college, at four per cent. That will save us six thousand dollars a year, and this saving, put out at interest here, will in ten years, with added interest, enable us to save more than a hundred thousand dollars. Thus in ten years we shall have paid all the debt of the college. This we can undertake without any difficulty or danger. The revenues of our Chicago house are at least thirty thousand dollars a year, of which we can save fifteen thousand dollars, surely. Our other Fathers say twenty thousand, but I shall put it at fifteen thousand. Consequently in six or

seven years we shall be able to pay all the debt, even without counting on any revenue from the college.

But for this we shall require the permission of your Reverence to go to Holland, myself and Father Van Goch. All our traveling expenses will be paid by the brother of Father Van Goch, who has already sent us a bank draft for this purpose. We shall be absent only three months of the summer, during which time we ordinarily give no missions here, owing to the heat. So nothing suffers in that way. I am not asking for this journey for the pleasure of it, although it is true that my relatives wish very much to see me once more in this world. This, however, I do not consider a sufficient motive for granting the request. But the welfare of our work here seems to demand it, and on that account I hope your Paternity will grant it. . . .

Commending myself to your Holy Sacrifices and prayers, I am, my very Reverend dear Father,

Your most obedient son in Jesus Christ,

A. Damen, S. J.

Damen received a favorable answer to his request, and wrote to Father Beckx a letter from Queenstown, the first stop on the way to his destination:

Queenstown, Ireland,
June 25, 1868.

Very Reverend dear Father General:

We left New York on the 13th of this month and made a very favorable passage. Thanks to God, we had the great privilege of celebrating Mass every day of our voyage, I and my companion, Father Van Goch. We also were able to make all the spiritual exercises every day. We preached the word of God to poor sinners who were on the boat, heard Confessions and administered Holy Communion during the voyage, with the result that those who left America as sinners, and away from their religious duties ten and fifteen years, arrived in Europe just men, determined to live as Christians in the future. May God and the holy Virgin Mary help them to persevere to the end.

Almost all the Catholics received Communion. Among the Protestants we often spoke on religion and I believe we impressed them. I regret very much that we did not bring some books explaining the faith to give to these, for they were very friendly, sought our company and wanted to talk with us on the Catholic religion, and on the Jesuits. I am persuaded that the reading of some good books would have ended the matter and that we would have had the happiness of bringing some of them into the Church. It is something we shall try to correct on our return.

Every day at six in the evening we recited the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin in public. Nearly all the Catholics were present, and the passengers said they had never seen a crowd so well ordered and devout. As a matter of fact, they liked to attend Mass so well that they had to be told not to try to come to two Masses, because the room was not large enough to hold them all at one time. A Spanish lady from South America was the only one who was allowed to attend the two Masses, because I was not able to explain to her why it was not desired.

The letter goes on to ask the General to allow him to visit Rome before his return to the United States. One of the reasons he gives is 'that I desire very much to speak to your Paternity in the interests of the missions in America. For ten years I have been superior of the missions in the United States. To tell the truth, it is I who began the missions, or the Spiritual Exercises for the people. Eleven years ago the Fathers rarely gave the Exercises or a mission. On that matter I desire to receive some instructions. I have several important questions to be solved. I wish to be sure that I may act always according to the spirit of the Society. . . . Permit me to add another reason, though but a personal one. All my life I have wished to visit the tombs of the holy Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, as well as to obtain the blessing of the Holy Father.

the successor and representative of Our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

Father Beckx invited Father Damen to visit him in Rome after the business affairs in Holland were completed. Damen conferred with the General on the missions, had an audience with the Holy Father, received a special blessing for himself and for the people of his parish and returned home by way of Ireland, in order, as he said, to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of so many of his beloved flock and to derive inspiration from the land so famous for its devotion to the faith. Upon his arrival home he was welcomed with a great parish reception. He responded by telling the people all the story of his journey, dwelling on what he had seen in Ireland and praising particularly its religious fervor and its deep faith, which he hoped would be reproduced in the Holy Family parish.

With this sound financial beginning, St. Ignatius College was built without any undue strain upon the parish. In fact, as things turned out, it was Damen himself who repaid the whole amount both principal and interest, he had borrowed in Holland. He did this from the contributions he received through several years from Catholics whom he interested in the college while he went about on his missions. Among the still surviving parishioners of that day, there are those who remember him saying that none of the parish money was ever invested in the college.

Up to this time, the Catholics of Chicago who wished a higher education for their sons, were compelled to send them away from home. Now they took advantage of the home school. Others who could not afford a boarding school for their boys were here offered the opportunity of giving them a college course at moderate expense. The way was opened to the professions and many boys eagerly seized the chance. The infant college grew and throve steadily until the pres-

ent day, when it numbers more than six thousand students in all departments. Vocations to the priesthood ripened fast. Even before the college opened, vocations had begun to appear through the parish schools. Father James O'Meara, now more than sixty years a Jesuit, who remembers those days well, writes as follows:

> In the year when St. Ignatius College was opened, I found four bright boys of Father Damen's first school children entering the Novitiate at Florissant after their classics at St. Louis University. I had observed them at the University while I was studying philosophy. They were Patrick Murphy, John Kennedy, Michael Cushing and Thomas Fitzgerald, who was our Father Provincial from 1894 to 1899. As these are all dead, *haec olim meminisse juvabit.*
>
> Those were the first early fruits. But that parish continued to be a nursery for vocations. Who can count the priests and religious whose vocations were fostered during the last sixty years?

Father O'Meara's question may be approximately answered from statistics given in the *History of the Holy Family Parish,* published in 1923. Up to that time two hundred and thirty-five priests and clerical students were counted as claiming St. Ignatius College for their *Alma Mater.* If we add these to the number previously given for members of Religious Communities of women, we have the total of six hundred and forty-nine vocations, or an average of more than ten vocations a year for sixty years. We do not know of any parish in the history of the Church that excels this. And it all began with one man in a little wooden church out on a windswept prairie.

In the midst of the preliminaries for the founding of St. Ignatius College, there was serious danger for a time that Father Damen would be taken away from it. The long and hopeless illness of Bishop Duggan during a critical period of Chicago's religious growth

had made it imperative to choose a successor. Damen's feat of building up the west side of Chicago within a dozen years and his consequent intimate knowledge of Church conditions in Chicago pointed him out as the man. He was very popular, too, with the clergy of the city and a large number of them considered him the fittest person to meet the situation. Once before in St. Louis, in 1855, his name had been considered as Bishop of that city. He had escaped the burden then. But in 1869, it seemed very probable that in spite of himself he would be appointed Bishop of Chicago.

Father Coosemans, the Provincial, became alarmed at the possibility. His only hope of carrying the incipient college through safely was, as he said in the letter above quoted, 'provided Father Damen be not taken away.' He was then fearing the change, and he wrote to the General to inform him of the gravity of the situation. To withdraw Damen at that juncture would mean for the college complete collapse. There was no one available to take his place. It was largely through Damen's own efforts that the change did not occur.

Before concluding this summary of the varied activities of Father Damen, we must mention one other important work of his. Very soon after his coming to Chicago he introduced to the parish and to the city, the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, a Congregation of religious women whose special vocation it is to supply in emergencies that cannot be taken care of by other Religious. They do not specialize in any one line of exterior work, but hold themselves ready to help in any field where they may be needed. This establishment was a particularly wise move of Damen's at the time, since with the rapidity of parish growth there were emergencies everywhere, and constant sudden calls for teaching or for nursing the sick or for aiding the

poor. The Daughters of the Heart of Mary built in the parish a home for working girls, and later took up the education of the deaf and dumb. Their work is essentially quiet, unobtrusive, but is still going on with sustained spiritual power.

CHAPTER XV

THE CHICAGO FIRE AND AFTER

IN OCTOBER, 1871, just when Chicago had begun to feel the thrill of a settled and growing prosperity, came the staggering blow of the great fire. Within three days the city was seemingly wiped off the map. A writer in the *Woodstock Letters,* under date of November 12, 1871, begins as follows:

Chicago is proud Chicago no longer. The fire king has robbed her, not only of her pride and wealth, her pomp and luxury, but also of many of her sanctuaries and shrines, of her monuments of Christian charity and devotion. The cathedral and the episcopal residences, churches and chapels, schools and academies, monasteries and convents, orphanages and asylums of innocence and penitence, have been buried in one promiscuous grave.

The fire broke out just beyond the boundaries of the Holy Family parish and was accompanied by a high and veering wind, that later turned into a fearful gale. Three months of continued drought had preceded, and the wooden houses of which the city was principally built were like tinder in the flames. The speed of the fire can be judged by the fact that within six hours it had traveled in an air line more than two miles. At first there appeared to be no immediate danger for the church and parish. But the shifting wind turned and drove the flames directly from the east right down on the Holy Family district. There seemed to be no escape. Just as the fire reached the boundary line of the parish there came a change. 'The flames,' the same writer tells us, 'were sweeping like a torrent along the

boundary line of the parish without ever daring for an instant to cross, or to trespass on what looked like consecrated ground. Then there came a turn. Had it been toward the west nothing could have saved us. Fortunately for us, it was toward the east. The fate that had been hovering around our flock was averted.'

From that moment the fire drove east and north, away from the parish. The Holy Family parish was saved. When they saw themselves out of danger they turned at once to help those about them in distress. The college was one of the first places offered to the Relief Committee for the storage and distribution of supplies, which poured in from all parts of the country. From the variety and quantity of the articles stored away on the ground floor, and the number of trucks unloading at the sidewalks, a stranger passing by would have thought that the building had been suddenly turned into a vast commission warehouse. The Benedictines, and the orphans of the Sisters of St. Joseph found shelter in the classrooms of the college. The Sisters themselves were cared for by the nuns of the parish. Thousands of the destitute and hungry gathered around the doors to receive provisions and clothing. 'In addition to this,' says the writer of this account, 'we enjoy the satisfaction of giving hospitality to our venerable Bishop, who has permanently taken up his abode with us. He has a suite of rooms adjoining the parlor, goes to meals with the Community and sometimes attends our recreations.'

It will be asked, where was Father Damen and what was his share in aid of the disaster? The following authentic account, written by Mr. John Kelly in the *New World,* October, 1921, will perhaps help to explain the Providence that shielded the parish from destruction:

For fifty years seven lights have burned day and night in front of a statue of the Blessed Virgin in the Holy

Family Church. These lights commemorate the escape of the edifice from destruction in the fire of 1871.

Jefferson and Dekoven Streets, the starting point of the fire, were just across the boundary lines of the parish. With a strong wind blowing from the east, it looked for a time as if nothing could stop the flames from sweeping the entire west side of the city.

It is a matter of history that the wind veered and drove the fire eastward across the river, thence to the lake, and north for a distance of more than three miles.

Father Arnold Damen was holding a mission in Brooklyn at the time. His assistant telegraphed him that there was grave danger of his beloved church being destroyed. The message was handed to Father Damen in the confessional at St. Patrick's Church.

Father Damen went to the altar and remained there alone the greater part of the night, praying for the safety of his church and the homes of his parishioners. For many years he had struggled to pay off the debt on the church, often making long journeys to procure funds for that purpose.

With tears streaming down his cheeks, he made a vow that if his petition were answered he would, for all time, keep seven lights burning in front of the statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

A curious fact is that not one of the parishioners of the Holy Family Church lost his home through the fire, although the prairie was dotted with thousands of frame cottages. Iron, brick and stone structures melted like snow before the flames, but the wooden dwellings were unscathed by the providential shift in the wind.

Taking the first train for Chicago, Father Damen arrived to find the main part of the city in ashes. Gathering his flock about him, he held a Mass of thanksgiving, and in a voice often choked with sobs, told his hearers of the vow he made.

'My vow must be kept,' he said 'so long as this church stands. Let those seven lights be lighted today in front of the Blessed Virgin's statue, and I charge you, my children, to keep them burning until time has erased this church of God. To my successors I bequeath this vow as a

legacy, and you, my beloved flock, see to it that my wishes are respected.'

The statue stands in an obscure corner of the old edifice, and before it is a triangular shaped candelabrum. For several years candles were burned, but it was such a task to keep them lighted during the night that gas jets in the form of candlesticks were substituted.

These lights have been kept burning to the present day.

As things turned out, the Chicago fire, instead of being a disaster to the city, proved its greatest business asset. The smoke had hardly cleared away when the citizens began on another Chicago, better in every way than the one they had just lost. A letter of Father Coppens to the *Woodstock Letters,* dated March 28, 1873, a year and a half after the fire, begins thus:

On Tuesday, the 18th, I reached Chicago by the Illinois Central, whose depot is on the lake, in the heart of the lately burned district. I was rather surprised not to see around me that bleak charred plain, of which so much was said and written after last year's terrible conflagration. As I walked up State Street, and rode in the street cars along State and Madison Streets, I saw, it is true, some empty spots and remnants of fires; but nearly all the houses had been rebuilt for miles around, and that on a grander scale and in a more elegant style than before. I had heard much of the enterprise of the Chicago people, but of such work as I saw had been done here, I never had any conception. No wonder the inhabitants are said to be getting prouder of their city than ever!

This increase of the prosperity of Chicago spread into the Holy Family parish. Business throve there; larger stores came in, better homes were built; the population of Catholics grew very fast. During the fifteen years that followed the fire, the work of Father Damen was at its peak. Although he kept constantly going out on mission work, he still directed the parish

and found means to meet every advance in its growth. He built most of the great group of schools during this time, as well as the Sacred Heart church and residence. The religious fervor of the people kept pace with this material growth. We quote again from the letter of Father Coppens, giving his impressions of the faith of the people:

I went to the church to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Though it was a week day and the morning far advanced, and all the services were over, I found at once a respectable congregation gathered before the altar. On the next day, the feast of St. Joseph, Holy Communions were plentiful, but as I did not then intend to write this account, I did not inquire how many. That night at half past seven o'clock, there was a congregation of probably some fourteen hundred people to hear the praises of St. Joseph and to receive the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On Friday night a much larger congregation still, assisted at the Way of the Cross. These are nearly all working people, who after the fatigue of a busy day (such as business is in Chicago, where every vehicle and every pedestrian hurries along as if the city were still on fire) can be gathered at any time and to any number for devotional services in their beloved church. In fact, every day had its own edifying sights. . . .

But it was on Sunday my enthusiasm and admiration reached its height. I will not speak of the congregation crowding the church every hour of the morning, but shall only mention what is peculiar. At seven o'clock in the morning the drum and fife were heard and a band of young musicians were seen marching from the school house to the church, at the head of a procession of some three hundred boys. The drums were deposited near the side altar and all the boys received Holy Communion. We were three priests distributing Holy Communion at that Mass and I was tired when it was over. The church was crowded and at the same time another congregation was hearing Mass in the basement. Every Sunday has

some Sodality or other at Communion. That of the married men counts five hundred members, that of the women three hundred; there is one of the young men lately started and counting already about one hundred and fifty, another of young ladies with three hundred. On the Sunday of my visit, twelve hundred Sacred Hosts were distributed though there had been many Communions on St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's days during the foregoing week. At nine o'clock I saw about eight hundred girls at Mass in the convent of the Sisters of Charity, who have the parish schools. I saw thirteen hundred boys at Mass and listened to the instruction given them. It was an explanation of the catechism well adapted to their youthful minds. In the afternoon there were the various Sunday schools. To attract pupils to these, there are three papers published by the Sunday School Board, two monthlies and one bi-monthly, so that every Sunday a paper is given gratis to all who come in time. That day twenty-six hundred papers were thus given out. . . .

All these gratifying works of salvation are of course performed by many hands. But there is one man, who has been constantly the soul and heart of this vigorous body of laborers, whose name is written in the hearts, not only of all his thousands of parishioners, but of many more thousands of the faithful scattered over this wide country. I need not add that it is likewise written in the hearts of his loving brethren.

Between Damen's arrival on the blank prairie and the writing of this letter, only fifteen years had intervened. Like John the Baptist, he had gone into the desert and the people had followed him.

Church and school routine were not his sole dependence in keeping the people together. He got up parish entertainments for social meetings in the winter months and outings for them in the summer. His method of assembling a crowd for an outing was unique. First he announced a picnic for a certain day. When the day came, he started out from the church on foot, leading a group carrying flags and banners, and accompanied

by a band. They marched east on Polk or Taylor Streets gathering recruits from all sides as they went. Music playing and flags flying, they arrived, a great parade, at the depot, boarded a special train for a favorite lakeside or woodland spot, and spent the whole day in open-air sports and amusements. On other occasions the journey was a hike down Canal or Jefferson Streets and thence to O'Neil's Woods, just north of the river at Halstead Street. Damen mingled with them as one of themselves, and thus came into familiar touch with every soul in the parish. People from different sections of the parish, too, learned to know one another intimately, a democracy of interests was established and a corresponding unity of spirit.

These spontaneous and homely amusements of the early Chicagoans seem as remote from the modern citizen as the tomb of Tutankahmen. The sophisticated city child today would bestow upon them merely a languid glance as upon something quaint, bucolic. Anyone today who would try to carry through a successful outing by the simple process of walking down the street and waving a few flags, would be halted by the police as a suspicious character. In Damen's day there was real social life in the community. More room for individual play of character, and none of the modern mass formations, promoted artificially. Nothing fascinates more than character genuinely revealed, and people who know each other well have little need of built-up entertainment. They find it in one another. Today we pack ourselves silently together into darkened halls, paying to get into them, and surrender ourselves without defense to any kind of wearisome pantomime that an utter stranger forces upon us, assuring us meanwhile that it is the one thing in our lives that we have always been looking for. The idea is gone that people in everyday life are full of entertaining interest, if only we could see them as they are. But,

packed in city crowds, we get out of focus with one another, become remote, self-conscious, suspicious, isolated. We can't see the woods on account of the trees.

Damen would hardly be happy in such an atmosphere. His free and open manner, his cheery laughter, mellow humor, his habit of moving in and out everywhere and of making himself at home in all places, would likely be sadly bottled up in this condensed age of introspective etiquette, where he would feel like a forest ranger in a period furniture shop.

But he was very much at home in early Chicago. He was the best-known priest in the city and through his missions was famous throughout the country. Yet, when at home, he did not move outside the boundaries of his parish. But his preaching in the church always drew large crowds from every part of the city. He did intense work in a leisurely manner. There was nothing about him of the external feverishness that deceives so many into thinking they are covering a lot of ground when they are merely hysterically moving up and down in the same spot. There was a serenity about Father Damen that allowed him to take up one duty after another with a steadiness and a lack of friction that left his mind tranquil and always earned him a margin of time for dealing with the unexpected. Emergencies never crowded or interrupted him. They were picked up and solved as he went along.

Bishop Murphy, of Belize, British Honduras, was an acolyte in those days in the Holy Family Church, and for years served Father Damen's Mass every day when he was home from the missions. His memories of Damen and his time are very clear.

As soon as Father Damen returned to the parish [the Bishop tells us] he became immediately an acting pastor, taking up the work tirelessly and putting himself into close touch with every interest of the parish. For a large man

his movements were very brisk, but smooth and never impulsive. His face wore always a look of innocence and gentleness that might well take away any bitterness from the rebuke or the severe reproof he sometimes had to employ on those who had earned them. Even when he was stern, and he could be stern, he left the impression that back of it lay forgiveness. But through the ordinary duties of the day he radiated benevolence.

His absence from the parish on his missions proved no detriment to the work at home. The staff of active priests with him—men like Fathers Corbett, Oakley, O'Neil, Lawler, Schultz, Setters—grasped his ideas of organization perfectly and followed instructions accurately.

Damen's great zeal for God's glory was always in evidence. He was at pains to have the best of everything for the church, fine vestments, artistic statues, handsome paintings. He took delight in the ceremonial of the Church, and aimed at perfection in all its details. He took a pride in the celebration of great festivals, such as Easter and Christmas, and was always at home for them. His heart was in the Holy Family parish.

His acolytes had to have the best possible of clothing in the way of cassocks, surplices, and general equipment. The liturgies of today would not perhaps approve of the gorgeousness of raiment they displayed, their capes with brilliant stars, birettas, long lace surplices from Belgium and Holland, white satin and silk cassocks for the leading acolytes. But a member of the acolythical society then was an honored person in the parish.

The public processions of the parish were looked upon by Damen as public acts of faith. They drew crowds from all over the city. The sodalities turned out in all the regalia, with Father Damen at their head, marching under the banner of the Blessed Virgin; the parish bands with music, and the cadets with their splendid drill made of the procession a thing of beauty.

In dealing with his people he had a sweet, familiar way with him that endeared him to the very young and to all the grown-ups. These were infallibly attached to him by strong affection and admiration. There was one group, however, that he did not seem to reach, and they were

the boys in their early teens. They respected him, but they feared him. They thought he domineered them. He demanded obedience from them on the jump. The grounds about the college attracted them and the nooks and angles of the buildings were a tempting setting for their noisy games. Damen guarded the church and surrounding property like a czar. What the boys looked on as a lively frolic, he called trespassing. And no doubt he was right. But whenever he could catch up with any of them, they could expect a clout or two as a reminder. They didn't like this, naturally. It didn't seem at all like Father Damen's way with all the rest of the people, and they felt disgraced.

Another thing the boys disliked—and I do not recall anyone else noticing it—was Damen's attempts to mimic the Irish brogue, especially of the poor Irish men or Irish women. As a matter of fact he could not get the Irish brogue well at all, which made the matter even worse. Damen probably intended to be merely good-humored, but the boys thought him prejudiced against the Irish, especially as he never attempted any other dialect. Their judgment was of course wrong, but they did receive the wrong impression.

Later years showed these same boys how utterly mistaken they were, and what a snap judgment they had made. They learned that back of this severity lay a deep and kindly interest in many of the very boys he appeared 'down on.' For they discovered that unawares to themselves at the time, he was keeping them at school, defraying the expenses of their tuition and books, and, in some cases even of their clothing, their parents being unable to provide these. Afterward these boys achieved distinction in life, became professional men, or mounted high in the business world, and found out, but not from Damen, that he it was who had seen them through.

Damen's failure to solve the character of the young Chicago boy and to win his sympathy, may be understood, we think, from the fact that he had never before met anything like the Chicago boy. Chicago was moving fast, but these boys went even faster. The world

seemed spread out around them on all sides and they were trying to cover all of it at once. The young Dutch boy did not develop in this fashion. The mercury in his temperament was traditionally held much nearer the freezing point. He was sternly kept in his place, and that place was definitely limited. He was told to be seen and not heard. The Chicago lad could easily be heard, but it took an expert to see him. This reverse of early home experiences no doubt puzzled Damen, and reduced him to the last extremity, generally a losing one with boys of that age, of resorting to corporal punishment. It may well be, too, that olden days in the classroom at St. Louis were still stalking in his memory. He may have been as much afraid of the boys as they were of him. In spite of being baffled by them, we see that he nevertheless liked them, looked ahead for them and provided for their future.

This is perhaps the only instance where Damen failed in his immediate dealing with character. He had an instinct in all other situations, serious or comic, for taking people right.

One May day, two young ladies of the parish were in the church arranging the May altar. It was the noon hour. Nobody was in the church and the doors were locked during the dinner hour of the pastors. With no interruption anticipated, the two became fascinated by the idea of giving a little mission of their own in imitation of Father Damen. Miss Elizabeth X., as the first speaker, mounted the pulpit, and getting as close as she could to a deep barytone, shouted at the top of her voice, 'Hell fire! If you don't mend your ways, my young man, you will go on to hell. And deep down into *hell* you shall go.' As the echoes were still ringing through the church, she heard a little cough from a shadowy corner and, peering down, she discovered with alarm Father Damen rising from where he was saying some prayers.

'Well, Lizzie,' said he with a smile, 'you would make a splendid missioner.'

Miss Elizabeth, now a nun, recalls that Father Damen enjoyed the incident decidedly more than she did.

All through his work in the parish, Damen made a great deal of going about on foot, meeting his people informally and joining in with whatever occupation or amusement they happened to be engaged in. One evening he was passing by a playground where a group of four young men, athletes, were competing before a crowd at putting the stone, the predecessor of our modern athletic game of putting the shot. These four were the best in the parish at this pastime, and as Father Damen came by they challenged him playfully, and at the same time confidently, to better their marks. Damen smilingly stepped over to where they were gathered and taking off his stovepipe hat, handed it to one of the bystanders, seized the heavy stone, poised, and hurled it with a mighty Vergilian heave far beyond the farthest mark made by the contestants. A gasp of applause went up from the onlookers. Damen genially acknowledged the compliment and passed on, with the crowd looking after him in wonderment.

On another occasion, after a day's hard work, Damen was settled in his room toward nightfall calmly smoking a Turkish pipe he had just received as a gift, when there came a sudden call that a wild man over near Polk and Aberdeen Streets was murdering his family. Without a moment's delay Damen sped from the house. Arrived at the scene, he found a crowd gathered around the edges of an open yard, and in the center of the yard, with nobody daring to approach him, a hulking fellow atop of a stack of hay, brandishing a huge butcher knife and shouting that he would kill anyone who came near him. He was either intoxicated or insane. Without waiting to discover which,

Damen pushed his way through the crowd, walked across the open yard up to the foot of the haystack and in a voice of thunder that could be heard half way across the parish, shouted, 'What are you doing up there? Drop that knife! Come down here!' The man seemed stunned, unnerved. He stared at Damen, dropped the knife in a dazed way, timidly began to clamber down from the stack and stood before him trembling and perfectly tamed.

Damen was at first surprised at his easy victory. But after the immediate excitement was over, he suddenly realized that it was not alone his stentorian command that had done the job. For he discovered himself wearing a bright smoking jacket and a fez cap. The friend who had presented him with the Turkish pipe had also sent a smoking outfit, and Damen had tried on the uniform for the first time that night. When the alarm sounded, he forgot all about his extraordinary make-up. The man on the haystack had doubtless been seeing things, but nothing quite like that, and when the tremendous thunder of command came from such an apparition, all power of resistance was shattered.

The active priest runs the gamut of experiences. He is the rock upon which every troubled wave breaks and comes to rest. There is no forecasting their kind or their number. They range from the simplest doubts to the most complicated difficulties. And moving, as they do, mostly in the territory of the supernatural and the things of the soul, it is not surprising that the priest could tell many things that bring us close to the border of the other world.

Over the entrance to the sanctuary of the Holy Family Church may today be seen two statues of acolytes, placed there to commemorate an incident in the life of Father Damen, which has all the marks of a supernatural occurrence.

Late one stormy night, the doorbell of the pastor's

residence rang. The porter answered the ring and upon opening the door, two boys stepped in and asked for a priest to accompany them on an urgent sick call. The storm was so severe that the porter, thinking to spare the priest after a trying day, asked if it would not be possible to wait until morning. The boys assured him that the woman was in such danger that she could not live through the night. Father Damen was awakened by the conversation, and overhearing its drift, would not allow any other priest to be called, but prepared at once to accompany the lads himself, and started out with them. The boys led the way for Damen through the storm and the flooded streets until they came to a lonely tumble-down house in a remote part of the parish, where they told him the sick woman would be found in the garret. Father Damen climbed the stairs and found the dying woman lying on a poor bed in a corner of the room. As he entered, the woman looked up in astonishment, but with great joy. Father Damen heard her dying confession, gave her the Last Sacraments and told her that he would have someone to come and care for her immediately. As he was about to leave, the woman said,

'Father, may I ask who called you to me? I have been very sick and I have wanted the priest, but I had no one to send.'

Father Damen replied that two young boys had come for him, neighbors, no doubt, he suggested.

'No, Father,' she replied. 'There is none near and no one knows of my sickness.' Father Damen was puzzled.

'Have you no boys of your own?' he asked.

'None living,' said the poor woman. 'I had two boys who were acolytes of the Holy Family Church, but they are dead.' He described the boys and she recognized them for her own. They had brought the priest

to their mother. On descending the stairs for the return journey, Father Damen found that the boys had disappeared. The mother died before morning. And the two statues in the sanctuary were placed there in memory of this strange sick call in the storm.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WORK OF THE MISSIONS

THE work of Damen's life which we have thus far endeavored to outline has been his Catholic colonization of the west side of Chicago. Damen discovered the west side for Chicagoans and was the greatest single propelling force behind its rapid growth. Father Conway, in his sermon on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the parish, calls Father Damen 'the greatest apostle of all the Jesuits of Chicago' and 'the founder and father of the Holy Family parish and the great west side.' And indeed, when we merely touch off on our fingers the list of his achievements there, we say to ourselves that this is surely a full life of work for one man. Two churches built, six schools, two high schools and a college, all fully equipped and functioning with detailed accuracy; a parish rising from the zero point to the largest parish in the world within fifteen years; the entire financial outlay necessary for this immense work procured, not by endowments, but dollar by dollar from the small offerings of the generous poor —looking at all this, one would naturally say, 'This is a wonderful monument to the activity of any man, a complete rounded-out career spiritually, educationally and financially. None but a giant could have done it.'

And yet, this was not Damen's greatest or most arduous work. Although this is the spot that he loved more dearly than any place on earth, it was only the hub of his activities. From this point his energy radiated out over the whole country from the Atlantic to

the Pacific coast, through the missions he conducted for more than thirty years.

Damen could not, in fact, be confined within the limits of a parish. His thoughts, aspirations, ambitions, spread far beyond, out to a world that needed the message of Christ. The apostolic command, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them,' he felt to the very depths of his soul as an imperative personal call, and he was restless until he answered it. While he was building up the Holy Family parish, he constantly had in mind the whole of America. The work he was doing for his people in Chicago must be carried abroad. Everyone must hear of Christ in his Catholic Church. From the very beginning of his building in Chicago he went out to give missions, at first only at intervals. But as the parish flowered and bloomed, and his home organization operated with increasing perfection, he gradually took more and more time to spread the Gospel throughout the country.

His success was instantaneous. The power of his preaching, and the apostolic gift he possessed of touching the innermost heart and conscience of all hearers, resulted in a demand for his services from every part of the country. Within a few years he was drawing immense crowds wherever he appeared. A letter of Bishop Lefevre of Detroit to Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati, dated April 6, 1860, tells of a mission in the former city:

Reverend Father Damen, S.J., gave an extraordinary mission at the Cathedral which was continued for three weeks, during which time we (from ten to fourteen, and sometimes sixteen, confessors) were from early in the morning until late at night constantly occupied in the confessional. This mission was indeed extraordinary in the good effects and in the sensation it created throughout the city and we had the consolation of giving the Holy

Communion to 7,500 persons and of receiving sixty-seven Protestants into the church.

As time went on, the wonder excited by these early missions died down, because such results became common. Wherever Damen appeared the same marvels of the operation of divine grace followed his preaching, until his name became a household word in every section of the United States. And he never lost this power until the end of his life.

Damen had, in a striking degree, the fundamental vocation of the Jesuit—the missionary vocation. This shows in his letters, his talk, his plans, his actions, his prayers. He always was looking for souls. And while he valued the indirect way of reaching them, as is evidenced by his provision for the education of his Chicago flock from primary grades to college, his great desire was, like Xavier's, to reach them directly. The method he employed was apostolic, and it was strictly in accord with the favored ideal of the Society of Jesus. Circumstances have forced the Jesuits to accomplish much of their work through the indirect method of education. But it is quite clear from their rules, their spiritual training, as well as from the special seal the Church sets on their work, that theirs is above all the direct missionary spirit. It was the ideal of Ignatius and all the early Fathers of the Order. One of their first rules tells us that it is according to their vocation to travel to any part of the world where there is hope of God's greater glory and the good of souls. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which we may term the spiritual backbone of the Society, and according to which all her members are trained, is a work almost exclusively missionary in its tone and content. Its keystone meditation is the Two Standards. And all the way it teaches nothing but Christ, and Him crucified. St. Paul, we believe, would have been delighted

with these Ignatian Exercises. Moreover, the official public approval of the Church rests particularly on the mission work of the Society. Her canonized saints, her martyrs and confessors enrolled among the blessed, are nearly all of them who lived to do the full work of the Society taken from among the missionaries. Even the Jesuit saints who were not formally engaged on the missions are remarkable especially for the missionary work they accomplished. St. Peter Canisius, who did much for college education, is nevertheless best known as the 'Watch Dog of Germany' for his missionary zeal. The Blessed Bellarmine, who stayed at home practically all his life, reached across Germany and France and over into England and Scotland with his *Controversies,* a missionary achievement if ever there was one. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, porter at the house gate in Salamanca for fifty years, is famous for his having shown St. Peter Claver his vocation to be apostle of the negroes. And today in the Church, we find Ignatius the patron of all retreats, Xavier of the foreign missions, Claver of missions to the negroes.

This missionary spirit underlies all Jesuit educational effort. Sometimes we read superficial estimates of the Society wherein it is described as essentially a body of teachers and men of learning. Aside from the comic-opera notion that any association of merely learned men could accomplish the work of Christ, it is certain that the Church would never recognize such a body as a part of her spiritual structure. With secular knowledge as such the Church has nothing to do. It is for the religious uses it can be made to serve that she values it. Properly employed, it is a means, but never the last end she proposes to herself in fostering it. Cardinal Newman, in his preface to *The Idea of a University,* brings out this truth very clearly. 'Just as a commander,' he says, 'wishes to have tall and well-formed and vigorous soldiers, not from any abstract

devotion to the military standard of height or age, but for the purposes of war . . . so, in like manner, when the Church founds a University, she is not cherishing talent, genius or knowledge for their own sake, but for the sake of her children, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness.'

Education therefore serves the Church exactly in proportion as it is lit up from within and vivified by this missionary spirit, the desire to spread the kingdom of Christ. Indirect though its method be, it is nevertheless an effective weapon, but only as it has its inspiration from the direct desire for the salvation of souls. This is its breath of life, otherwise it is dead clay.

Damen did not underestimate the worth of educational work in the Church. This is clear from the way in which he made room for it at once in his great parish for its full training from grades to college. He did, however, see the danger of so overemphasizing its importance that in the minds of some who were engaged in it, culture might come to take the place of religion, and natural intelligence be considered a satisfactory substitute for divine grace. He himself was always a strong advocate of the direct appeal of the Church to the human soul. Membership in the Church came first in every sense with him, and all the rest would follow. 'You can have Catholics without colleges,' he said, 'but you cannot have Catholic colleges without Catholics.'

With this conviction, he turned himself to the wide field of the missions.

Father Damen was the first priest in the United States to give missions, as we commonly understand organized missions nowadays. Others before him had gone over various parts of the country, evangelizing and fortifying the Catholics scattered through its territory. Following the retirement of the Indians, emi-

gration set westward in a steady tide. New lands thrown open for settlement were rapidly occupied. The swiftness of movement, the shifting from place to place over the vast spread of country as more attractive opportunities arose, and the consequent difficulties of communication made the Middle West for many years simply a disappearing ground for the early settlers. Nobody knew where they had gone to. Priests were scarce, numbering not nearly enough to care for the Catholics in the established towns of the East. Only a few priests were able to adventure in the West, and these had to pick their way from place to place, directed largely by hearsay. It took robust health, tireless energy and iron endurance to last for any length of time under such hard and hazardous toil.

Gradually this wandering population began to enucleate itself into little communities and then the missionaries had something more tangible to start from. Single missionaries then began to go about, preaching, baptizing, confessing and saying Mass for these communities at set stations. They revived the dying sparks of religion among those who had been without the help of the Church for many years and prepared the way for more organized work to follow on a larger scale. The Redemptorist Fathers were early in this field and did excellent pioneering. The name of Father Mazuchelli, the Dominican, is a name that is revered in Wisconsin and the North. Father Ponziglione, the Jesuit, did similar work in the Southwest. And Father Weninger traveled over a great part of the country giving missions as he went. From the letters of Father Paul Ponziglione to his Provincial, Father Thomas O'Neil, we can get a very good idea of the life these traveling missionaries led sixty and seventy years ago in the far West. Father Ponziglione spent most of his religious life in America working over the vast space of Kansas and adjoining territory. His journal as written is full

of interesting details, but we can only skeletonize a bit of it here, since our purpose is merely to mark his movements. We give an outline sketch of one of his journeys as reported to his Provincial.

On the 18th of September I left for one of my missionary excursions northwest of Osage mission. And first I directed my course to the Verdigris River, visiting all the Catholic settlements I have formed from Greenwood City up to the very sources of the river. . . .

From the sources of the Verdigris I passed to those of Eagle Creek, to visit a Catholic settlement. This settlement is composed of Germans. They gave me a cordial reception and next morning all came to their duties. . . .

I now turned my way toward Eureka. I had to travel some 40 long miles, and night overtook me on a very large and high prairie, and as the nearest house was 6 miles distant, I had to put out for the night on the green grass, which was plentiful and offered excellent food for my horse. All was silence around me and I sat down to eat my supper, which consisted of some dry bread and fruits. . . .

At dawn of day I was up, and having taken my breakfast, which was as frugal as the preceding supper, I was on my way about sunrise, traveling alone through those interminable prairies. Toward noon I reached Eureka, numbering some 1,500 inhabitants, of which only some twenty are Catholics. I had the pleasure of offering the first Mass that was ever celebrated in Eureka. Hearing that some seven miles west there was a girl who was very sick, I went that day to her house and administered to her the Last Sacraments. . . .

From her house I took the way that leads to Eldorado and stopped on Bird Creek, to say Mass for the few Catholics of that locality. The settlement is very small and poor, but the faith of the people forming it is great. . . .

From Bird Creek I passed to Eldorado. Here I found some new Catholics, but very few, so I did not stop long, but proceeded to the junction of Walnut and Turkey Creeks, said Mass there, and thence descended to the con-

fluence of the Walnut and the Whitewaters, where a small but interesting town, called Augusta, is springing up. . . .

Leaving Augusta, I took an old Indian trail going directly east, and after nearly two days of a fatiguing and lonesome journey, through a hilly and rocky prairie, I came to Fall River. I then directed my route to Burlington, and pressing along the Neosho, I stopped at the source of a small stream called the Pecan, where we have a Scotch settlement, all very fervent Catholics. On the 6th of November, I again got on the western trail and came to New Chicago. The next morning I had a good attendance at Mass, the first Mass ever offered in the town.

Though a very heavy rain continued falling almost the whole of that day, I traveled some twenty miles through an immense prairie, which divides the waters of the Neosho from the Verdigris; and the next day I reached Fredonia, visited the Catholics scattered there, read Mass for them, and left for New Boston, started last May by a Catholic colony of young men. Though the day was a very bad one, on account of the rain that came streaming down from heaven, we had a tolerably good attendance.

About noon I took up my course on the east bank of the Canis. The wind was very chilling and I suffered a good deal on that account. At last, after two days of traveling, I reached the Osage Reservation in the Indian Territory. I remained there with them some seven days. Though the weather was very bad by reason of the continual rain, and the creeks all very high, I went around the best way I could through the settlements formed between the junction of the two Canies and the Agency, a distance of twenty miles. . . .

This was my last missionary excursion of this year, and it was a very hard one, on account of the bad weather which accompanied me through the whole of it. . . . We are only three priests and are attending over 5,000 Catholics, scattered in this far West, over a territory of more than 200 by 100 miles in extent. Indeed we have reason to say *messis quidem multa operarii autem pauci.*

This work soon grew to be of imperative importance. The Jesuits had recognized the need of such missions

at an early date. In 1843, Father Murphy, who later was visitor to the Missouri district, wrote to Father Roothaan, then General, hoping that something would soon be done for this new situation arising through the West. His idea was to have men 'to go about, after the manner of St. Francis de Sales, proving and explaining Catholic belief, without mentioning heresy.'

Father Weninger had already devoted himself for years to the *Volksmissionen,* or popular missions to the German people scattered over the country. He worked entirely across the United States with very striking results. He did perhaps as much as any one man to keep the German immigrants, many of whom had very little knowledge of English, in the Catholic faith. And his experiences made him see clearly that the same work was needed for all Catholics in the country. They were drifting away from the Church through lack of priests, through isolation and hostile environment. In 1851, he wrote strongly to Father Roothaan calling for missions for all the neglected Catholics in remote localities.

In the general correspondence of the Missouri Jesuits with headquarters, the call for missions persistently recurs. Father De Smet writes to Rome in 1854: 'We are impatiently looking forward to the time when we shall have a body of missionaries for American Catholics.' In the same year Father Gleizal wrote to the General that all the Jesuits express regret that nothing is done along the line of missions. He insists that college work was taking up too much attention relatively to the spiritual necessities of the country. 'Bishop Miege,' he adds, 'is of opinion that I should communicate with you on this matter. He thinks, as I do, that the missions is the work of works.'

Four years later, Father Weninger returns to the charge. After citing St. Francis Xavier's opinion of the doctors of the Sorbonne taking it easy in Paris while souls were suffering in India, 'Who will under-

stand,' he continues, 'how it happens that so many Fathers in the colleges are teaching boys algebra and working chemical experiments for them, while at the same time, before their very eyes, crowds of souls are being driven headlong down to perdition? . . . We must indeed do one thing and not neglect the other. Colleges are necessary and very excellent things. But they are not what is chiefly, much less what is exclusively needed in the present condition of things in this country.'

Anxiety about the neglect of large bodies of Catholics took hold also of the Bishops. The second Provincial synod of Cincinnati, in 1858, while appreciating the work already done by the Jesuits in the diocese, especially by Father Smarius, recommended that more men be sent into the mission field, and asked for periodic missions in all parishes. Upon receiving this express wish of the Council, Father Beckx wrote from Rome, to Father Druyts, the Jesuit Vice-Provincial:

'In a matter of such importance, belonging as it does, to the principal activities of our Institute, your Reverence will endeavor to comply effectually with the very reasonable wishes of the Bishops.'

Father Druyts, in reply, represented the shortage of men for the work already in hand, but promised nevertheless that the General's wish should be attended to at once. He then asked the General's permission to shorten the period of tertianship for some of the Fathers then engaged in the year of spiritual study and meditation which follows their ordination. He mentioned among them Fathers Damen and Smarius. The General gave him the permission.

Father Druyts at the same time wrote to Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati, explaining that the colleges were the great drawback to the missions, but that two or three men would nevertheless be set aside immediately for the work.

Fifteen years had thus passed since Father Murphy, the Visitor, had recommended the sending of men out to preach to the people. Now at last something was apparently to be done. A beginning was made with the formal appointment of one man, Father Coosemans, instead of the four or six asked for by the Bishops. He started out and did excellent work in the Cincinnati province. His reports to his superiors, supporting Weninger's position, show his realization of the great need of missions and his appreciation of the response the people everywhere made to his efforts. But he had hardly got started when, in January, 1859, he was withdrawn and made President of St. Louis University. And again Father Weninger was the only missionary left in the field. The mission movement was back to its minimum.

This retirement of Father Coosemans aroused the indignation of Father Weninger. He protested to the General at the change. 'This ministry of the missions,' he wrote, 'is of far greater importance A.M.D.G. than the office of Rector.' Other appeals of the same import were sent by many of the Fathers.

Father Beckx was moved by their pleadings and again and again suggested to Father Druyts the necessity of advancing the cause of the missions. Father Coosemans should be replaced, at the least. 'Could not Father Damen, among others, be put at this work?' he asked. 'However, I do not insist on this, for I know that he labors with much fruit in Chicago.' Father Damen had had his tertianship shortened for the express purpose of hastening his appearance on the missions, and there were yet no signs of his engaging in it.

'I desire,' wrote the General again, 'that more Fathers, as far as circumstances permit, be assigned to the missions.'

Father Druyts begged for time. He had not supposed that the Bishops and the General had wished

this matter attended to immediately. He saw what should be done for the missions, he said, but did not have the men. Damen was now building and organizing the Chicago west side, and could not be absent. Smarius was a necessity in St. Louis. Driscoll was putting up a new church in Cincinnati. Nobody who was apt as a missionary, was free. 'The number of preachers among us is not considerable.' Viewing all the possibilities, he could not recommend a single person for the missions. Clearly, Father Druyts was not merely distressed. He was bewildered.

This hesitancy and timidity in launching out into the missionary field strike the impartial observer as a strange attitude for a missionary body to assume. Father Druyts' position is only to be explained from his words to Archbishop Purcell, that the colleges were 'the great drawback to the missions.' He seemed unwilling to risk anything in the colleges for the mission venture. Theoretically he favored the missions, but practically he was strong for the colleges. He knew the good work the colleges were doing. But though he had come to the United States as a missionary, he had had no practical experience of the immense possibilities of the mission field. His angle of observation was academic, cutting off a direct vision of the missions.

Nevertheless, the current was beginning to flow, however feebly. An idea, like a tree, takes time to grow. Insistence on the necessity for missions continued. Damen's name began to be mentioned more and more. The roots of the mission idea were starting into life. Providence was guiding matters toward finally establishing Damen as the great trunk of the mission tree. As soon as his work in the Chicago parish had taken shape, he was assigned to the missions during all the time he could spare.

Damen's first occasional missions, which were merely the prelude to his later great work, when he car-

ried on continuously, were nevertheless so impressive in their results that Father Weninger now wrote to the General thanking God and the Blessed Virgin that at last 'the English missions have been begun. Let your Paternity be convinced that the missions are the very sort of employment necessary above all others.' Only develop the missions and, he says, 'we shall hear of wonders. More will be accomplished A.M.D.G. for the salvation of souls in one year than in a hundred years through the colleges. Facts speak. In every English mission Father Damen receives fourteen, sixteen, twenty, nay in one mission as many as sixty Protestants.'

As a missionary, Damen appeared on the scene just as the nomadic stage of western life was drawing to its close and the industrial age beginning. This transformation took place with striking rapidity. Farms began to appear; towns sprang up over night; business crystallized into shape; steady traffic streamed from point to point. The great West swung out of its nebular condition into a visible system of connected interests. American business was taking off with its first rush.

For the faith of Catholics this was a peculiarly dangerous period. Up to this time they had drifted about with scant opportunity of keeping close to the Church. Many of them could hear Mass but occasionally, and even less often receive the Sacraments. There were no Catholic schools for their children; sermons and instructions were a rarity. Their daily prayers and the fading recollections of the religious teachings of their childhood were all that held them moored to their faith. Often enough this grew to be a very slender thread that the slightest strain could sever.

And now the material things of life began to appeal to them strongly. Money appeared on the scene; business boomed in the towns, and hummed along the rail-

roads and waterways; the prospect of wealth opened before poor men for the first time in many centuries; the possibility of civic distinction, of an equality of importance in the nation's life dawned upon them. Naturally, the ambition to profit by their chances, and to exercise powers long atrophied by disuse, grew in them like a fever. The temptation was to throw themselves at any cost into the flood that led on to fortune.

In many cases the cost came high. For, together with the absence of Catholic instruction and the Sacraments on the one hand and the contagious fever of money-getting on the other, the religious atmosphere all about them became positively hostile. Catholics were outnumbered a hundred to one and every one of the hundred despised the Catholic religion. They were looked down on, too, as ignorant, fit only to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. The kindest feeling toward them was a condescending pity, only a short step from contempt. The attitude of the educated mind toward Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century can be realized in the pages of insular and solemn snobbery of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Boston high priest of transcendental culture. And the animus of the uneducated revealed itself in the Know-Nothing movement and the burning of the Catholic churches and convents of Philadelphia.

We of today do not appreciate the bitter struggles, both from within and from without, that the Catholics of the 'forties had to wage to hold true to their faith. The marvel is that they could be pushed so far underground, and afterward emerge with a vitality which was to form the solid basis of all future Catholic growth. But the danger was great, the temptation constant and omnipresent to give up their hold. No one saw this danger more clearly than Damen, and no single man did as much, perhaps, to meet it efficiently and to

keep alive among those early Catholics the practical faith that we are building upon today.

He could not look on these sufferings and perils of his fellow Catholics and remain at home. The missionary call was too strong. The command 'Go, and teach,' pursued him so constantly that it became a part of his life. He must go out to these people, revive and strengthen their faith, hearten them to endure. He would campaign the whole United States, everywhere, from the largest cities to the smallest towns, meet every class of persons and preach the word of God to them. And when he got the word to start, he had definite and matured ideas of just how he would cover the field. He would travel much, of course, as did the other priests who had gone before him. But he differed from them in this, that he would put system into his drive. He planned his work on a business basis. First of all, he aimed to travel on schedule. He signed up large cities, small town parishes, scattered communities, ahead of time, so that they could prepare to meet him. The priests in parishes could thus announce his coming to their flocks, and go out and gather in the strays. In sparsely settled districts the news would have time to spread. Arrangements could thus be made for the long journeys that many of those people would have to take to attend the missions. For Damen intended to stay a week at least in each place, and up to three and four weeks, if the work demanded it.

He had, moreover, a very definite spiritual aim in his campaign. He was never a man who did anything at random or left the success of an undertaking to a break of chance. And much less here, for he looked on the missions as the great work of his life. His purpose was twofold: to strengthen the practical Catholic in his faith, to bring back the lax and the fallen away; and after that, to present to his non-Catholic fellow citizens the reasonableness and the beauty of Catholic teaching,

to convert them to the Church if possible, or at least to enlighten bigotry and to clear away prejudice.

To attain the first end, namely, fortifying the Catholic, he chose the mission as his effective weapon. And for the second, he prepared a series of popular discussions on such points of controversy as commonly came up between Catholics and Protestants, explaining lucidly the doctrine of the Church and refuting its misrepresentations.

In following out both these purposes he was again characteristically systematic. For the ground plan of his mission work he followed closely the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. This famous method for the rehabilitation of the moral life is exactly what it describes itself to be—a series of setting-up exercises for the soul. The medical physician prescribes for the health of the body fresh air, sunshine and exercise. In a parallel manner, the Ignatian method of gaining soul health calls for fresh air of meditation on the teachings of Christ, the exercise of the will determining to follow Him, and the sunshine of God's grace implored through prayer. The complete treatment offered by Ignatius occupies a full month divided into four distinct periods. The first period considers man's place in the world, his dependence on God and the service due in consequence. The three following periods go into the details of this service, basing all its lessons upon the life of man's model, Christ, from His birth to His resurrection.

This series of more than a hundred and twenty meditations is logically and progressively built up, broadening and deepening as it advances. And nowhere is its treatment of the patient merely automatic. It does not regard the exercitant as a person passively undergoing an electric massage. On the contrary, he must reach out to the truths briefly presented, assimilate them into his own mind and will, do his own praying

for light and grace. In short, he must live the Exercises himself, not listen to them. It is personal action that is demanded from him.

Damen could not, of course, in a week's time, give this whole treatment. Accordingly, he selected the first period, the foundation of the Ignatian Exercises, as the core of his mission, deftly introducing along the way such portions of the other three periods as could be assimilated without blurring the clear-cut aim of his work. He intended the mission to be an intense spiritual drive. A drive, to be effective, must have four things. It must have force, direction, continuity and cumulation. In other words, it must go, and go straight, go all the time and with increasing power as it travels. After some experimenting and observing of practical results, Damen finally arrived at the following arrangement of subjects, which was strictly adhered to as far as possible and is the program of the Jesuit missionaries to the present day. He divided the mission into two parts, namely, morning and evening services. The topics of his sermons were sequential in each division, but were nevertheless so chosen that the sermons in one division helped those in the other, and the correlation was so skillfully done that at the end of the mission one great single impression was left on all those who made it. An outline of his plan as he finally shaped it, will make this clear.

Damen's one object in the mission was to give his hearers a horror of sin and then teach them how to fight it with all the aids of the Catholic Church. This is how he proceeded: His evening sermons were as follows: On the End of Man; On Sin; On Confession; On Hell; On Death; On Judgment; The Holy Hour; On Perseverance.

A brief consideration will show how well these topics dovetail together, growing into a final appeal from

which the listener will find it logically impossible to escape.

The first subject, the end or purpose of man, develops the idea that man belongs to God, hence that he must not sin. Then follows the concrete study of what sin actually does to a man. This, in Damen's hands, became a powerful study of the interior life of the sinner and his misery. The remedy for this condition was next taken up in the sermon on Confession, with the dogmatic proof of its institution as a Sacrament and a full revelation of its healing power, consoling and encouraging. The next sermon, on Hell, unfolds the lasting punishment of the unrepentant sinner. This, according to all accounts, was Damen's most terrifying sermon. Then the sermon on Death, a concentrated view of life from the standpoint of the exit from this world, showing the hollowness of a life of sin and its folly. Judgment gave the same view from the threshold of the next world, underscoring the impression produced by the consideration of death, with the final divine decision stamped upon the sinner. The Holy Hour, introduced later by Damen, gathered all these ideas together before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and the last sermon on Perseverance, given at the end of the mission, after Holy Communion had been received and a new start resolved upon, practically directs all how to go onward in the new path.

Damen's whole mission was based on the text, 'What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' And he never let go of that idea for a minute. The destiny of man, the problem of the world, the importance of his solving this problem and of saving his soul, met the hearer at every turn and isolated him from every other consideration until he had settled for himself this one thing. And Damen held so tenaciously to this one idea all through its varying aspects and consequences, wove from it so logical and per-

sonal an argument that his hearers were unable, and at the last, unwilling to break loose from it. They were caught in the net of salvation. They knew, saw, felt, what sin is and what it does to them, as they never felt it before.

This was the first division of his plan. Parallel to this and co-ordinated with it, came the morning sermons, filling in all along the line with practical helps for the avoidance of sin. Each morning sermon was carefully adjusted to follow up the work of the night before, as strong contributary streams to the main channel. Thus, for example, after the sermon on the End of Man, came the topic Prayer, the great help to attain that end. After the sermon on Sin, a practical talk on how to go about making a good Confession, thus encouraging the sinner by taking him, as it were, by the hand, and going over the ground with him personally. After the night sermon on the spiritual necessity of Confession, followed the morning talk on the Mass, the great central act of faith in Christ and the open proof that one's Confession is sincere. So through the talks on the use of the Tongue, on Holy Communion, on the Blessed Virgin, all of these together covering the Commandments and the Sacraments in sufficient detail to round out and complete the work. To put Damen's mission plan in a nutshell, the evening sermons made a man look at himself in his relation to God; and the morning talks prescribed the means to readjust that relation and gave him the antidotes to preserve it. The whole formed a strong practical course in fundamental spirituality.

This mission was intended primarily for adult Catholics. But Damen soon saw that children also could profit by a mission, and early in his career he reached out for them. He assembled them from the parochial schools at certain hours of the day when the press of the regular mission was lessened and gave them a little

mission suited to their years. He arranged, too, to have the Catholic children in the public schools released for those hours to attend these talks, and he heard all their Confessions.

The lectures to Protestants were given on the day after the mission was over. Ordinarily he gave one lecture, sometimes two or three on successive days. His subjects here were on the Bible and its private interpretation; on the Church, as the only true Church of God; on Confession, its reasonableness, its scriptural foundation, its moral power; on Popular Objections against the Catholic Church.

Damen was not satisfied, however, with simply giving lectures to non-Catholics. He had not been long in the field when he discovered that many of them wished to come in closer touch with the missionary, and to receive personal answers to their difficulties on religion. He therefore opened a class of instruction and made it a regular section of his mission work. It grew to be of great importance, advertised as it was for weeks before the mission began, and during the mission constantly recommended. Many of his most faithful converts were the product of these conferences and instructions. Thus it will be seen that Damen covered the entire field, leaving no loophole of escape for anyone who sincerely wished to turn to God and the true Church. He provided for the Catholics, young and old, and for non-Catholics he opened every possible road to the removal of their prejudices and their ultimate conversion.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CALL FOR MISSIONARIES

THE first missions undertaken by Damen were given while he was still the acting pastor of the Holy Family parish, and they were given alone. He was not entirely familiar with the spiritual tone of the country, and he went ahead tentatively, supposing that he would likely be able to carry on by himself. But he had hardly started when he discovered that this work was just what these people had been athirst for. They came up as it were out of the ground by the thousands. It was like some magic. Everywhere he put down the spiritual drill he was greeted by a gusher that poured all about and nearly submerged him. The fields were white and ready for the harvest. But the laborers for the reaping—where could they be found? Damen called for help, and as we shall see, he kept calling for help the rest of his life. He foresaw at once that the work would keep overtopping the efforts of all the men he could muster to attack it. As to his being able to carry on alone, it was like trying to bail out the ocean with his scooped hands. In Detroit, in the spring of 1860, while in the midst of a crowded mission, his voice failed. He wrote to Father Druyts on March eleventh:

In the name of God send Father Smarius, or at least Father Coosemans. My voice has given out; I can scarcely be heard. I force myself because I see the terrible condition in which religion is. So many have apostatized from the Church, so many have abandoned the practice of religious duties, that I cannot but exert myself to bring back these lost souls. At the same time I may lose my voice

forever if I continue. Do then, for God's sake, send Smarius or Coosemans to help me. You know well that I am the last man to call for assistance when I can do it myself. But I must acknowledge this time that I cannot do it.

I am strong myself and feel myself devoured with zeal, but my voice fails me. The people are attending in crowds and do expect a great deal from this mission. The good of souls, then, the glory of God and of our Society demand that you send some one at once to help me. Oh, think how large a city this is, how many souls bought by the precious blood of Christ. Do, then, for God's sake, send Father Smarius or Coosemans.

As he moved from place to place and the Bishops, the priests and the people saw the great revivals of faith springing up in every spot he touched, applications for his services came to him from every side. He kept trying to get more men for the work. The best he could do was to have one or two men loaned to him for part of the time.

At last, after two years of exhausting mission-giving that would have prostrated a man of less powerful physique, the tide turned. Damen obtained his first permanent relief, partial though it was as to the number he required. 'The turning point in the fortunes of the missions,' Father Garraghan says in his *History of the Missouri Province,* 'came with the appointment of Father Cornelius Smarius to the work in 1861, as teammate to Father Damen.' For ten years, the decade from 1861 to 1870, Damen and Smarius were the two names upon everybody's lips as the most successful missionaries that had yet appeared in the United States. Sometimes together and sometimes separately, they went through the East and the Middle West, followed everywhere by the gratitude and the blessings of Bishops and people for the great good they wrought for souls. Father Smarius was a native of Holland, born in 1823. At eighteen years of age he came to the United States

to enter the Jesuit Novitiate at Florissant. He was ordained in 1849, and later for four years, between 1852 and 1856, studied theology at Fordham, N. Y., specializing in Patristic literature. He was also a close student of history. These special studies proved a strong aid in his after career of preaching. From the first, moreover, he had aimed steadily at the mastery of English and he persevered in this until it became practically his mother tongue. He realized thoroughly, as did his other *confrères* from Holland, that a lack of excellent English is a forbidding handicap to efficient teaching in any field.

For some years Smarius taught rhetoric in St. Xavier's College, Cincinnati, and was then assigned to preach in the College Church of St. Louis. Here his ability as a preacher first won striking attention. Catholics and Protestants came to hear him and he made many conversions to the faith. He was not soon forgotten in St. Louis. In 1879, nearly twenty years after his departure from that city, Judge Robert Bakewell said, 'When will St. Louis again have a public speaker who could move an audience as could Father Smarius?' Damen and Smarius are perhaps the two most prominent examples in this country of supreme success in preaching in an adopted tongue.

Mr. John Lesperance, himself a member of the Jesuits for a time, afterwards a well-known journalist, and a lifelong friend of Smarius, wrote in the St. Louis *Republic* an appreciation of Smarius after his death. Smarius, he says, though possessing a fine presence and a resonant voice, was not especially favored by nature.

His head, though shapely, was almost completely bald; his neck was short and he wore spectacles, a drawback which he frequently regretted, as preventing him from mastering his audience through the eye. Yet his oratorical efforts were irresistible.

The thing which gave his eloquence the character of genius was its intense human sentiment. He would go along for a while in the best academic fashion—he generally wrote his discourses—when suddenly something would strike him, either in the sequence of his thought or the attitude of his audience, and then he would transform. The broad chest would swell, the eye flash, the head toss, the voice peal like a chime of bells, and the play of imagination would be such as to throw off a series of images, in climax or anti-climax, that I can compare to nothing so well as to the fabled images of the Magic Mirror. At a Commencement Day in St. John's College, Fordham, N. Y., I remember that somehow everything had gone wrong and a dismal failure was imminent, when Father Smarius, who was a visitor here and had been invited to address some words to the graduates, changed the whole aspect of affairs in a few minutes. He spoke not more than a quarter of an hour, but the effect was electrical, and the audience almost beside itself.

His first introduction in St. Louis was through his lecture on *Pagan and Christian Families,* which he dictated to me only a little earlier, and read from my manuscript. I was as proud as Punch of that circumstance. I remember that Rev. Henry Giles and the eloquent Uriah Wright were on the platform that night and declared they had never heard a grander performance.

Smarius was the author of *Points of Controversy* which still holds its place as a clear and forceful exposition of Catholic doctrine. His funeral oration over Governor Bissell of Illinois, who died a Catholic, and his address to the Missouri Independent Guards in their camp at the St. Louis Fair grounds in 1860, may be mentioned as examples of his style and power.

The arrival of Smarius on the mission field, welcome as it was to Damen, did not serve to reduce the pressure of work. Just the opposite happened. Applications for their services grew out of all proportion to their combined ability to meet them. Father Garraghan writing in the *Illinois Catholic Historical Review,* says:

Every visible token of undoubted success marked the parochial missions preached by Fathers Damen and Smarius. During the twelve months, September, 1861, to September, 1862, each of the two had conducted eighteen missions, resulting in 600 conversions to the faith and in 120 reclamations of fallen-away Catholics to the Church. Moreover, they distributed during the same period more than 50,000 Holy Communions, at least one fifth of these being to persons who had long neglected their religious duties, some for as many as ten, twenty, thirty, and even fifty years.

In short, the presence of two men on the missions simply emphasized the need for still more. Both Damen and Smarius now joined in asking for co-laborers. During the year they succeeded in securing Father Tschieder for part of the time. But the demands for missions kept increasing. Father Damen endeavored to meet the situation by writing to the General the following letter:

CHICAGO, Sept. 25th, 1861.

VERY REVEREND FATHER BECKX AT THE GESU,
ROME, ITALY.

My Very Reverend and dear Father General:

I hope your Paternity will pardon me for writing in English. I have only a couple of hours and I could not do it in French or Latin in so short a time. I wish to give your Reverence a short account of my missionary labors since I wrote to your Paternity, which is over a year now. Since that time I have given 30 missions, in some of these Father Tschieder has been my co-laborer. In these 30 missions we have given about 90,000 Communions; we have brought back to the Church some 30,000 persons, who had either abandoned the Church altogether, or had neglected the Sacraments of the Church from 2 to 50 years. Many of these would never have returned to God had it not been for the missions, for several acknowledged this, saying: 'Father, had it not been for the missions I would have been damned, for I had solemnly resolved never to go to Confession, but your strong and paternal appeals to our

hearts softened me and I cannot resist any longer.' I am (and so is Father Weninger) accused of appealing too much to the heart, and that consequently the good results will not be permanent. Still, several pastors and some Bishops write to me that the fervor after the missions, even two years after their termination, is still fresh and persevering. Many a time infidels have come through curiosity, and before the end of the sermon, they were seen bathed in tears, hiding their faces, the people astonished that such hard cases (as they call them here) should ever be moved to tears or to repentance. Of this number of communicants, I presume that 10,000 had made sacrilegious Confessions and Communions for years. Some of them had received the Last Sacraments sacrilegiously.

Since I wrote to your Reverence we have had 260 converts from Protestantism to our holy religion, many of these being fathers and mothers of families, and there is every hope that their children will be brought to the Catholic faith. Among these converts there were many persons of high standing in society. One of these was, and is, a judge of the United States courts, another, a Protestant preacher of great talent and of great renown, who are now most edifying Catholics. On one occasion I had six Protestant preachers and a Protestant Bishop in my audience. I challenged them to contradict what I proved, and said that they dared not, because they knew that they were leading the people astray. The Protestants called upon the most learned among them to contradict me, but he answered that my arguments were convincing. He preached his farewell address to his Protestant congregation in a few days and became an edifying member of our holy Church.

Secret Societies. Many have abandoned these altogether. In many places the secret societies have been broken up, not without a great struggle against worldly interest and a most violent war with human respect.

There is perhaps no country in the world where missions are more necessary and where they do more good than this country. The demands on us for missions are very great. I hoped that Father Visitor would have been able to do more for the missions, but he perhaps cannot. We

are three Fathers now for the missions, Fathers Smarius, Tschieder and myself; but as Father Provincial allows only two Fathers for the Chicago Residence, one of the missionaries is always to stay at home in Chicago; for two Fathers cannot possibly do the work of our church here. We have in our church in Chicago about 35,000 Communions per year, about 600 baptisms, some 40 converts, a great many sick-calls, two sermons every Sunday, and a catechetical instruction, also attending to the convent of the Sacred Heart. These good ladies render immense services to our church. They teach the parochial school of the girls, which otherwise would cost us 1,000 dollars per year, and they do it for nothing, besides rendering many other services to our church. Through their instrumentality I have gotten at least $10,000 for our church. It would therefore be a great injustice were we not to give them spiritual help, Confession, instructions, Mass, etc. I am glad that Father Visitor has decided that those Religious who are in the parish, should be assisted by us spiritually, and if it were not for receiving our spiritual help, they would have to abandon their establishment in Chicago. Therefore, my dear Father, you see very well that two Fathers cannot do all this work. In our parochial school we have 400 boys and 300 girls. The number is constantly increasing. Three hired teachers and two Brothers conduct the boys' school, six Ladies of the Sacred Heart teach the girls.

We have built a large house, containing 26 rooms. It is nearly completed, and nearly paid for. I have done this at the urging of Father Provincial. Father Visitor says that he had disapproved of its being built, but I did not know anything of this and Father Provincial says it is a *felix culpa,* for it was very necessary. Our building was very uncomfortable. Now our missionaries will have a comfortable home. Chicago is the center of sixteen dioceses in which we give missions. Other dioceses apply sometimes for missions.

Frequently the clergy of these dioceses apply to us to make a private retreat with us. We now have rooms to satisfy their pious desire, but we have no one to give them the Exercises. Here, my Reverend dear Father, comes a

petition; for they say that I am a great beggar, and I must keep up my reputation and beg something of my good Father General. Could your Reverence not induce Father Provincial to give us a Father for the missions, so that we could go out *bini et bini,* and another Father to help the Fathers of this residence and at the same time give the Exercises to the diocesan clergy, who apply to make a retreat? Oh, my dear Father, you would be instrumental in converting America.

October 25th. As you perceive, I commenced this letter a month ago. Since that time we have given the Spiritual Exercises to the clergy of two dioceses, and two missions in which we have had 46 converts from Protestantism to our holy Church. We have now applications for missions enough to keep us busy for two years to come. Fathers Smarius and Tschieder go together, I go by myself, which I dislike very much. There is a Father in St. Louis who has only three pupils in his class, who would do admirably well for the missions, namely Father Koenig, a Hollander, but who speaks English very well, who is full of zeal, and preaches excellently. Could your Paternity not appoint him for the missions? He is thirsting after this favor. Do, my dear Father, do something for our missions in America, and give us Father Koenig as a companion. I will train him for the missions. Now being alone, I have to preach every day three times, and be in the confessional from 6 o'clock in the morning till 11 o'clock at night, which is too much to be kept up long.

Father Smarius is doing very well as a missionary, he is a powerful preacher, and has great facility, he is always ready, and assiduous in the confessional and is truly a spiritual man. I am very much pleased with him. Hoping that your Paternity will give our petition a favorable consideration and recommending myself and co-laborers to your Holy Sacrifices and prayers, I am

Your most obedient son,

A. Damen, S.J.

It does not appear that this request for more missionaries was immediately successful. Damen was not

discouraged, however. He continued to present the case for the missions. He took up Weninger's intense, if somewhat temperamental, pleas for help, and turned them into sonorous sermons that rolled across to the General in his letters, opening up the situation with businesslike facts and carrying it through with a characteristic energy and fervor difficult to resist. Evidently the General was touched by the latest letter. He answered Damen on December 14, 1861:

Rightly does your Reverence consider the work of the missions as among the primary works of our Institute and highly deserving of all our solicitude. I have already repeatedly recommended the Superiors and will recommend them afresh, to promote missions of this sort and Spiritual Exercises to the public.

For the rest, it is clear to me that you cannot, for any length of time, be equal to so great a weight of labor and that for this reason companions ought to be assigned to you. I have recommended, and I will continue to recommend, that they lend you assistance, if by any manner of means it can be done.

In the spring of 1862, Damen writes again to Father Beckx, this time not only asking for missionaries, but suggesting also an expansion of parish and college work in the diocese of Cleveland:

CHICAGO, April 23, 1862.

Very Reverend dear Father General:

As I have promised Rt. Rev. Bishop Rappe of the diocese of Cleveland, Ohio, that I would write to your Paternity on the subject of getting some of our Fathers for his diocese, and as I have but little time, your Paternity will please excuse me for writing in English.

I have given a mission in the Cathedral of Cleveland, and on that occasion Bishop Rappe told me that he desired very much to have some of our Fathers in his diocese. He offers us the choice of any city in his diocese,

and later, when we shall have the subjects, we could open a college.

The city of Toledo is the one that I would recommend. It is a rapidly growing city, on the shores of Lake Erie, has several railroads, and will become a very large city. There are now in Toledo two good churches, one English and one German, and they are building another English church. There is a very comfortable and elegant residence adjoining this church. This property the Bishop offers us in fee simple.

I think, Very Reverend dear Father, that this is a very fine opportunity and that we should try to accept the Bishop's offer. It will require only three or four Fathers to attend the churches, and would it not be far better to give up some of our small churches in Missouri, in country places, where there is no prospect for the Society, where they cannot live in community? I allude to the German churches which we have about Washington, Missouri.

I have repeatedly petitioned Very Reverend Father Visitor and Provincial to assign to Father Smarius and to myself a companion for the missions, but we have gained nothing as yet. Now, Very Reverend dear Father, the labor is too much for one man. We preach three or four times a day, then hear Confessions from six o'clock in the morning till eleven at night. This is too much to be kept up for a long time. Each of us ought to have a socius. Allow me to suggest the names of some Fathers whom we think suitable for the missions: Fathers Coosemans, Verdin, Driscoll, Mearns, Garesché, Heilan. I think that a missionary ought to be able to preach in such a manner as not to bring the Society into disrepute and he ought to be a prudent and exemplary man.

In about two months I will give your Paternity a report of the fruits of our missions. I will only say now that since I wrote to your Reverence last, we have had about five hundred converts from Protestantism to our holy religion, many of whom are persons of standing in society.

Recommending myself to your Holy Sacrifices and

prayers, I remain with great veneration, Very Reverend dear Father,

Your most obedient son in Christ,
A. DAMEN, S.J.

Whether Father Damen realized it or not at the time, his suggestion for a church and college in Toledo jeopardized the success of his appeal for more missionaries. His plan was to transfer to Toledo the priests from the country parishes in Missouri. But if this were not done, and Toledo was nevertheless accepted, it would necessarily mean the appointment of other men for the work, thus endangering his chances for more missionaries. There is hardly any doubt that he did consider this. But his passion for spreading and strengthening the faith made it impossible for him to pass by any field where he thought the good seed might be planted, and his trust in God gave him confidence that anything he started would be carried through.

Both the suggestions made in his letter were followed a quarter of a century later. The Missouri parishes were given into good hands, and the church and college in Toledo opened by Jesuits from Germany. But his request for immediate help in the mission field was not satisfactorily answered.

Meantime the work kept spreading. Requests for missions began coming in from priests and Bishops in such numbers that Damen and Smarius had to open a waiting list, contracting to care for missions in the order of their application. They endeavored as well as they could, to group successive missions and thus to save doubling in their tracks. Often they succeeded in this, but at other times the map of their travels zigzagged back and forth all over the country. Damen has left very little in the way of detailed written accounts of his movements. He never felt the urge of autobiography, nor deemed that his memoirs would ever prove a source of enchantment to anyone. To him

it was all in the day's work of the Catholic Church, and its importance for the next world was all he thought of. Nevertheless, we do feel now that his impression of, and his comments upon, the growing young church of that twenty-five years would be of distinct historical advantage. He went everywhere in the country, he met so many people from every walk of life, he saw things so clearly and justly and he had the faculty of describing so plainly and directly that there is no doubt at all that we have missed a great deal of inner Catholic life that would prove intensely interesting today. I think it may be safely said that no man of his day understood the spiritual temper of the people of the United States more intimately than did Damen.

The only discoverable records kept of his work, is a plain, sequential statement of the dates and places of his missions, together with a very brief account of the ground covered spiritually—the number of Communions at each mission, of the First Communions of adults, of conversions to the faith and of Confirmations, Baptisms, marriages validated. Here and there a short note is added, indicating how some emergency was met. It is little more than a simple bookkeeping account of cash on hand.

We can see from it, however, how his work grew. In the beginning it moved in circles nearer home—Waukegan, De Kalb, Sycamore in Illinois; Battle Creek, Grand Rapids, Marshall in Michigan; Lacrosse, Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin; Dubuque and Davenport in Iowa. Gradually it moved south, east and north. Cincinnati, Toledo, Circleville in Ohio; Louisville, Newport in Kentucky; Missouri and Indiana came in and then a number of missions in Philadelphia. Canada enters with Ottawa, London and Toronto, and then a long stay, from January to November, in New York, Brooklyn, New Haven and Jersey City.

The presence of Father Smarius on the missions

was only a temporary relief. The calls for missions became so numerous that the two men could not stay together. In the endeavor to cover the ground, they had frequently to separate, each doing double work alone. This could not last with safety to either and in the fall of 1862, Fathers Van Goch and Converse were sent to assist. A letter from Damen to the General gives us a view of conditions a year later.

CHICAGO, June 12, 1863.

Very Reverend dear Father General:

I have intended this long time to send to your Paternity an account of the missions given by Father Smarius and myself from September, 1861, to September, 1862, but my many occupations have been the cause of this seeming neglect. During the period mentioned we have given 36 missions of eight days each. Through them all the wonderful grace of God has worked with us. Some 600 Protestants have been received into the Church, and 120 fallen-away Catholics returned to a membership long forgotten. We have given more than 140,000 Holy Communions. Of these at least 40,000 were to persons who had deserted the Church and the Sacraments completely for periods of from ten to fifty years. Among them, one hundred, belonging to various secret societies, left these and returned as faithful sons of the Church.

Indeed, the fruit of our work surpassed all our expectations. The eagerness of the people to hear the word of God is most encouraging. They leave behind them all their work, they come from as far distant as thirty miles, and wait long hours during the night for their chance to go to Confession. Hardened sinners of whom their pastors had long despaired are seen shedding tears as they return to the Father of mercy and again take up the service of God. Everywhere we have established sodalities and confraternities that the fruit of the missions may be lasting. Many thousands have received the scapular.

The Bishops and the priests console us by telling us how the seed sown during the missions continues to bear rich harvests. After the missions, they say, many Protes-

tants are converted through the light they saw at mission time and through the consequent dispersal of their prejudices. After reading Catholic mission books they finally came to be numbered in the flock of the Good Shepherd. Among these are to be found persons of high social standing.

But the work is hard, and few are to be found whose strength is sufficient to preach strongly three or four times a day and to hear Confessions from early morning into the middle of the night. Then there are visits from Protestants, infidels, with objections to be answered and difficulties to be solved. This alone occupies two hours after dinner every day.

All these together are too much for one man. The work should be divided. Each of us ought to have a companion. This has been finally done. Last year Reverend Father Coosemans gave us each a companion.

As to our Chicago establishment: Our location is very convenient for travel, a central point in the United States, whence railroads branch out to all the states.

All the debt contracted for building our missionary home has been paid. The interest on the church, also, and the debt itself diminished to $5,000. The parish is prospering under the care of four Fathers, who work most faithfully bringing an admirable increase in the piety of the faithful. We have a school of 600 boys which was begun by Brother Thomas O'Neil with five lay teachers; another school for 400 girls under the care of the Nuns of the Sacred Heart. Both schools are flourishing. Our Community is animated with a good religious spirit. The rules are well observed as well as human frailty will allow and all are faithful in the performance of their spiritual exercises and indefatigable in laboring for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

We are already conducting many retreats for the priests of various dioceses every year. During August, 1862, I gave the Spiritual Exercises to the priests of the diocese of Louisville, Ky. The Reverend Bishop and twenty-five priests were present and all made the retreat with the deepest recollection and fervor. Silence was observed perfectly. I gave another to the priests of Alton, Ill. The

Bishop with 65 priests made this retreat, which was blessed with much fruit. At the same time Father Smarius gave the Exercises to the priests of the diocese of Vincennes and Milwaukee. There, too, the desired results were obtained.

We are still at the work of the missions. Father Converse was appointed to go with Father Smarius, and Father Van Goch with me. The latter has proved satisfactory, though he is not robust, and I fear he may not be able to stand this work. As to Father Converse, experience has shown us that he has not the qualities necessary for a missionary. He is unable to preach extempore and his memory is not reliable. At present he is staying in Chicago, helping in the parish.

As yet Father Smarius has not been given another associate. I grieve that Superiors cannot do more for the work of the missions. In our colleges there are many Fathers who would make excellent missionaries. The Rectors seem to think that they need them. And yet how wonderful is the fruit of the missions: so many sacrilegious Communions repaired, so many marriages validated, so many souls freed from the fetters of Satan, so much hatred destroyed; parents instructed in the education of their children for God and the Church; thousands of the faithful, knowing scarcely the rudiments of their faith, wavering in religious practice, ready to embrace heresy, or drifting to infidelity, now revived by the Holy Spirit through the missions and afterward prepared to pour their very blood for the Catholic faith.

There are many apostasies from the Church, principally because of the lack of instruction. They have been away from the Church and her priests for years; they grow up without knowing their religious duties, live among heretics and infidels who calumniate and ridicule the Church constantly, so that they finally blush to be known as Catholics and join non-Catholic churches. And although the Irish do not openly profess Protestantism, still their children perish out of the fold.

Would that your Reverence could see and hear these after a mission! They openly glory in the religion of Jesus

crucified. Their hearts are filled with spiritual joy because they are the sons of the holy Church.

I assert confidently that if you realized the needs of religion in this country, and at the same time saw what can be done by the work of the missions and how little is accomplished in the colleges, you would undoubtedly command that at least six Fathers be put on the missions. But I grieve most bitterly because Father Provincial now tells us that in the future Father Smarius and perhaps I myself will be deprived of a companion.

Therefore I beg your Reverence to look over the catalogue and to see how many Fathers are occupied in the colleges, some of them professors with but three or four pupils in their classes. All this I have mentioned to Father Provincial but without any hope of bettering matters. The Rectors of the colleges are with Father Provincial and the Consultors of the Province. They know nothing of the missions from experience. They never have been exercised in the functions of the sacred ministry, and as a result, all our expostulations have no weight with them. Demand, therefore, I implore your Reverence, that a suitable remedy be applied to this great evil as soon as possible.

A feature of our work that I must mention is that in every mission we take up controverted questions on such subjects as Confession, Transubstantiation, the Catholic Church the only true Church, Purgatory and other popular objections against our religion. Sometimes this lasts for two or even three hours. And though the greater part of the audience are standing, the crowds being so great, nevertheless such is their avidity to hear the doctrines of the Church, that they are accustomed to say they would willingly listen throughout the entire night.

In the larger parishes our missions go on for sixteen or seventeen days; in smaller places, eight to ten days. Besides the many Protestants we receive into the Church during the mission, 600 in the past year, we sow the seed for conversions that follow the missions. Many Protestants become Catholics after the departure of the missionaries. For after hearing our controversial talks, they obtain Catholic books recommended by us, and thus be-

come convinced of the truth and join the Church. We have established confraternities of the Sacred Heart and of the Scapular of Mount Carmel in every place where there was probability that they would be permanent.

Your obedient son,

A. DAMEN, S.J.

A year later Damen writes again to the General on the subject of the missions:

CHICAGO, August 22, 1864.

Very Reverend Father:

As it is impossible to give missions during the summer in this country, when the smaller churches particularly are filled to suffocation, I have returned to our residence. In the meantime I thought I would write to your Reverence telling you of our missions during the past nine months.

During this period we gave forty missions, Father Smarius, with his companion conducting eighteen and I with my companion, twenty-two. In all these missions we heard about 100,000 Confessions and distributed as many Communions. These numbers are less this year than last, because we visited smaller states and districts. 500 non-Catholics were baptized and received into the Church, and very many Catholics drifting on the verge of apostasy were led back to the true Shepherd. It is impossible to say how many adult Catholics, 30, 40, or 50 years old received the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. At the time they were not sufficiently instructed for their First Communion. Hundreds of wandering lost sheep returned to the way of peace, and fallen-away girls were brought back to a better life.

In all these places the frequentation of the Sacraments has been firmly established. The Bishops and clergy are highly satisfied with our efforts and they marvel exceedingly at the success of the missions.

So you see, Very Reverend Father, much has been accomplished for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The Spiritual Exercises were given to the priests

of three dioceses with much fruit and with great consolation to the Bishops.

But, alas, Father Provincial has now informed me that next year only two Fathers will be occupied on the missions, myself and one companion. Now, so many Bishops and priests have asked for missions that we cannot give them in two years even if we were four missionaries. Consequently I must refuse very many.

In truth, never did our Province undertake anything which promises more for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And now all this is, it seems, abandoned. During the past two years there were four of us, going two by two. Now there will be but two of us. Whenever it seems convenient to any of Ours to employ one or the other missionary in a college, they urge this on the Provincial in season and out of season until he yields, forgetful of the great harvest of the missions and the sterility in the colleges. So I earnestly beseech your Paternity to write Father Provincial, so that should necessity force him to take some Father from the missions, he shall try to put some other in his place. . . .

With great reverence I humbly commend myself and the missions to the Holy Sacrifices and prayers of your Paternity.

Your most obedient son in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

A. Damen, S.J.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CIRCLE WIDENS

DAMEN'S vehement calls for reinforcements in the mission field might appear exaggerated, did they not resemble in a singular manner the cry of St. Francis Xavier from India three hundred and twenty years before.

There is now in these parts [wrote Xavier in 1543 to the Jesuits at Rome], a very large number of persons who have only one reason for not becoming Christians, and that is that there is no one to make them Christians. It often comes into my head to go round all the Universities of Europe crying out like a madman, and saying to all the learned men there whose learning is so much greater than their charity, 'Ah, what a multitude of souls is through your fault shut out of heaven and fallen into hell!' Would to God that these men who labor so much in gaining knowledge would give as much thought to the account they must one day give to God of the use they have made of their learning and the talents entrusted to them. . . . They labor night and day in acquiring knowledge, and they are very diligent indeed in understanding the subjects which they study; but if they would spend as much time and be as diligent in teaching the ignorant the things necessary to salvation, they would be far better prepared to give an account of themselves to Our Lord when He shall say to them: 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' . . . I declare to God that I had almost made up my mind, since I could not return to Europe myself, to write to the University of Paris, and to show them how many thousands of infidels might be made Christians without trouble, if we had only men here who

would seek, not their own advantage, but the things of Jesus Christ.

These letters of Xavier and of Damen do not imply that either was opposed to college education. In other letters Xavier asked for missionaries of special training to meet the bonzes of Japan. And Damen was the founder and builder of the first permanent Catholic college in the Northwest. But both men viewed the whole broad field of the Church from a practical standpoint and, though more than three centuries apart, both arrived independently at the same conclusion. They believed that there was a lack of balance between the theoretical and the practical in the work of saving souls, and as men who realized a situation, they spoke out strongly to men who, they believed, did not realize it.

Father Smarius, also, as soon as he stepped into the mission zone, saw, like Damen, the need of reinforcements in this section of the Church's work. Writing for the *Précis Historique,* a Belgian magazine, he says:

The continual inpouring of Catholic immigrants from almost all the countries of Europe, especially from Ireland and Germany, and the lack of priests in proportion to this immigration, have demonstrated the importance and the necessity of these missions. Thousands of Catholics, principally in the larger cities, live in complete negligence of their Christian duties and of the Sacraments. To recall them to their obligations requires extraordinary means. The advertising of the mission, made and repeated many times before the opening day, arouses curiosity and attracts souls that still have any trace of religion left in them. The result is the return of many a prodigal son, and notable victories over rooted vices and bad habits.

The same need exists, relatively, in the smaller towns and villages. The working classes and the farmers are often at a great distance from the little chapels which the zeal of priests and the generosity of our poor have built

in the interior of our states. And these farmers and laborers have only from time to time the spiritual nourishment necessary to keep alive the spirit of religion, which like the lamp, is extinguished for lack of the saving oil—instruction and the Sacraments.

The mission revives the faith among them, reawakens interest for their souls' salvation and the salvation of their children. To give you convincing proof of this, let me state that in nearly all our missions we find hundreds of men and women who call themselves Catholics, and yet who have not been to Confession for from ten to forty years. It can be said without exaggeration that a fifth part of the Catholics who attend our missions are in this deplorable state.

Wherever Damen and Smarius gave their missions, the amazement that arose among even intelligent churchmen at the results effected, indicates how widespread was this lack of realization of the power of the missions over souls. A mission in the Cathedral of Cincinnati, in 1863, is described by Father John Schultz, the Rector of St. Xavier's College, as follows:

The mission at the Cathedral is succeeding marvelously. Every evening, church and basement are filled with an immense audience. Father Smarius preaches in the church and Father Damen in the basement at the same time, while two large chapels are filled with persons, some of them from 50 to 60 years old, who are preparing for their First Communion and Confirmation. From ten to twelve priests are employed in hearing Confessions. The Archbishop and the members of his household appear to be in admiration of it.

The mission will continue up to next Sunday and then, after Father Damen's departure for Illinois, Father Smarius will give instructions in dogma for a few days longer. Before coming to Cincinnati, Father Smarius gave missions in the towns of Bishop Miege's Vicariate. At Leavenworth alone, besides the conversion of a great number of Catholics who had not been to the Sacraments

for many years, 30 Protestants received baptism, either during the mission, or a few days later.

It is inconceivable, Very Reverend Father, what immense good is wrought in this country by means of missions and to what extent these missions are necessary. Oh, that we had a larger number of capable subjects who could be employed in this sacred ministry!

In New York, in 1863, Damen and Smarius gave a three weeks' mission in St. Francis Xavier's Church, in which twenty-two confessors were constantly engaged in hearing Confessions and seventy converts were made. This mission was, John Gilmary Shea wrote to Father De Smet, 'the most notable ever preached in this city.' We have a description of the close of this mission, written for the *Précis Historique* by one of the priests who assisted in it. He says:

Our mission finished yesterday. I scarcely venture to give you a description of it, I have so many things to tell you. The last instruction had to be given in three different places at the same time. Father Smarius preached in the church, to the men and women, Father Damen in the large college hall to men only, and Father O'Reilly in the basement of the church to women only. Each of the three orators was greeted with the sight of throngs of people crowding in, all eager to hear him. In order that the student galleries might be thrown open to the public, the students were placed in the sanctuary. The stage from which Father Damen preached was crowded with men standing up. At the entrance to the hall, a hundred auditors, unable to find room inside, were ranged along the steps of the stairway.

Several controversial sermons were given in the church. Protestants came in good numbers. Last Sunday, after High Mass, twenty of them were baptized in presence of the congregation. The first to approach the baptismal font was a worthy minister. The congregation was most edified by the public abjuration of four persons, who were returning to their mother faith, after having gone over to Protestantism.

On the preceding day a number were reconciled to the Church. Others at the same time took up religious instruction.

As to the Catholics, it is enough to say that the Confessions began the second day of the mission, and that thereafter there was no break from morning till night in the crowds around the confessionals. In spite of the number of confessors—from fifteen to thirty every evening—thousands had to go home without a chance to go to Confession. The people came from every corner of the city and from nearby towns. Last Sunday evening the street in front of the church was so blocked with the crowds that it was impossible to make one's way through. 'Why haven't the Fathers a bigger church?' was the question heard on all sides.

I know of persons from remote quarters of the city who took lodgings in the vicinity so as to be in time for the mission. Today is the close of the triduum (following the close of the mission) in honor of the Japanese martyrs. Confessions continue as numerous as ever. I don't know when they will stop. Let us bless God for all the good done here.

The clergy of New York were most grateful for what Damen did for their people and they were not willing to let him go. They recalled him for more and yet more missions. Every priest in the diocese wished Damen to come to his parish and bring to his flock the blessings all had seen and heard so much about. The consequence was that for many years, until a mission band was established among the Jesuits exclusively for that section, Damen gave a part of his time to missions in the East.

Accordingly we come upon such entries as the following, which he kept in a little diary recording the barest outlines of the work:

Holy Innocents, N. Y.—Communions, 12,300; First Communion of adults, 122; Conversions 24.

St. Mary's, Brooklyn—Communions, 12,400; First

Communion of adults, 350; Converstons, 41; Confirmations, 676.

St. Charles Borromeo, Philadelphia—Communions, 15,000; First Communion of adults, 150; Conversions, 32; Confirmations, 356.

St. Vincent's, Scranton—Communions, 10,000; First Communion of adults, 200; Conversions, 19; Confirmations, 600 boys, 400 adults.

St. Francis, Boston—Communions, 8,500; First Communion of adults, 159; Conversions, 8.

St. Michael's, Jersey City—Communions, 7,000; First Communion of adults, 60; Conversions, 10.

St. Patrick's Cathedral, N. Y.—Communions, 10,000; First Communion of adults, 230; Conversions, 25; Confirmations, 550 adults.

These are only excerpts from a long list of towns and cities in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland. Details beyond the statistics above mentioned are rarely given, except such notes as 'Many marriages revalidated'; 'A Sodality was begun'; 'A Temperance Society was erected'; 'Church and hall both needed for the Exercises.' We derive an occasional sidelight from other sources of the impression Damen's work was producing. After a mission in New York in 1865, with twelve thousand Communions, ninety-seven converts and five hundred adult First Communions, Father Coosemans writes to Father Beckx: 'Father Damen attributes this extraordinary success to the prayers of the little orphans who implored without ceasing the Lord's clemency on these poor sinners, while the Brothers were instructing the men and the Sisters the women so as to prepare them to receive the Sacraments worthily.'

Again, after a mission reported from Albany in the same year, with fourteen thousand Communions, forty-one converts, and four to five hundred First Communions of adults, Coosemans writes to the General: 'May God in His goodness preserve Father Damen for many

years to come, and deliver him from the indispositions to which he is subject from time to time.'

This rich harvest, continuing steadily from month to month, began to attract attention all over the country. Bishops in various dioceses asked for the missionaries. Bishop Elder, among others, begged Father Coosemans to send them to him for Natchez and Vicksburg. 'Unfortunately,' Father Coosemans writes of this appeal, 'the missionaries cannot fulfill his request, as I have no men free to send them. Oh, that we had a greater number of men, so as to respond to all the requests.'

Circumstances gradually shaped themselves so that Damen finally received part of the help he had been asking for during several years. Additions were gradually made to his band until in 1874 he had six or seven assistants, who gave at least part of their time to the very large missions. Father Florentine Boudreaux was the first after Fathers Van Goch and Converse to take up the work. In 1874, at St. Gabriel's Church, N. Y., Father Damen was assisted by Fathers Van Goch, Zealand, Masselis, Niederkorn, Putten and Koopmans. In the mid-seventies Fathers Hillman and Henry Bronsgeest entered the field. A remarkable feature of this group was that all, save one, were Hollanders who had learned to preach in good English, as Damen and Smarius before them.

Still the calls kept coming in, from East and West. And in 1876, two bands of missionaries were organized to cover the spreading territory. Father Garraghan, in his *History of the Missouri Province,* gives us an outline of one of the drives made simultaneously in different directions by the two bands of missionaries.

Six Fathers, led by Damen, and two or three under Father Coghlan, moved through the Middle West, the East and the South. The first band, composed of Fathers Damen, Zealand, Niederkorn, Bronsgeest, Hillman, Mas-

selis and Condon, gave missions in Edina, Missouri, then in Chicago, then went on to Brooklyn for three missions, besides preaching and lecturing in many churches in and around the city. Next they gave a mission at Rockaway, L. I., afterward going aboard the war vessels at the Navy Yard to hear the Confessions of the marines, sailors and recruits; then to Philadelphia and Boston, and from there south to New Orleans, where they found the piety of the people not so vigorous as in the North, though the Archbishop thought a great work was done there; to Mobile, Pensacola, back to Chicago, and out to Parsons, Kansas; back east again to Philadelphia, to Lynn, Massachusetts, and a two-weeks mission in Chicago brought this tour to a close, with 71,545 Communions, 276 Converts, 906 First Communions of adults and 1,782 Confirmations.

The second band, under Father Coghlan, held principally to the West—Morris, Ill., St. Mary's Landing, Mo., Detroit, Omaha, Denver, Boulder, Georgetown, Central City, Pueblo, shifted to Troy, N. Y., Shamokin, Pa., Davenport, Ia., East St. Louis, Bunker Hill, Ill., Bethalto, Gillespie, Litchfield, Oliphant, Pa., Pleasant Valley, Pa., Rochelle, Ill., with 44,720 Communions, 208 converts, 555 First Communions of Adults, 274 Confirmations.

It was during the mission given by Damen in New Orleans, February, 1877, that the famous Confederate General Longstreet entered the Church.

The large numbers of First Communions of adults was found by the missionaries to be caused principally by the neglect of parents to co-operate with the pastors in sending their children to be instructed. The lack of parish schools at that time was likewise a severe handicap to anything like the solid teaching needed by the children in the foundation truths of their faith, while the large number of transients made it impossible for the parish priests of that day to prevent strays from a flock that kept slipping away from their hands.

Every mission proved to be a kind of round-up for hundreds of these strays and the missionaries consid-

ered this an essential of their work. For many of these wanderers were heads of families and, more often than not, their neglected children came into the Church with the parents. So that the First Communion or the Confirmation of an adult often meant the return to the fold of an entire household.

For the instruction of converts a special class was organized and faithfully taught during the whole time the mission lasted. Those who were not yet fully prepared by the time the mission ended, were left in the care of the pastor of the church, who was to continue the class. Hours were assigned, too, for persons beset by particular doubts and difficulties. Conferences were arranged for these individually.

Some of these conferences developed an amusing side. During a mission in Indianapolis a prominent judge of the city attended the sermons and became convinced that he should join the Church. He sought an interview with Father Damen and showed so intelligent an appreciation of what the mission had thus far taught him that Damen judged him almost sufficiently instructed for baptism. But in order to see whether he had grasped all the fundamentals of the faith, Damen asked him some questions.

'Well, Judge, you know that there is but one God?'

'Yes, Father.'

'And how many Persons are there in God, Judge?'

'Well, Father,' after a long pause, 'I suppose there are a good many persons in God.'

'No, Judge, there are only three Persons in God.'

'Well,' said the Judge, reaching for his hat, 'if that's the case, I'm afraid there is no chance for me.'

Damen had stepped upon a soft spot in the Judge's theology. He took the Judge back to the Catechism and in due time received him into the Church.

The public reception of converts during the mission is not a custom followed by present-day missionaries.

The pastor now takes up the work of instruction where the missionary leaves off. The two or three weeks of intensive preparation is extended to months, and the convert must know the whole Catechism thoroughly. In those days, however, the lack of priests was an insuperable obstacle to this, and the missionaries were compelled to make up for it in intensive teaching. That they succeeded admirably in this is evidenced from recent study of the leakage problem among Catholics in the United States, which reveals the fact that the majority of foreign-born Catholics have remained faithful to the Church. To this result the missionaries and their teaching contributed a full share, and the missions must be regarded as a strong cementing power in the Catholic Church in the United States.

Damen's controversial sermons played a large part in his numerous conversions. He gave two of these either during or immediately after most of his missions. Four of them were printed, namely, *The Catholic Church and the Bible, Confession, The Real Presence,* and *Answers to Popular Objections against the Catholic Church.* Clear, direct, forcible in style, they are just the kind of reading that will hold the average man's attention, not so easy a task. Anyone who begins one of Damen's talks, will read it through. More than a hundred thousand of these were sold during Damen's time and they are still in demand.

Damen's missions were thus nothing like slap-dash affairs, rallies for 'getting religion' where frothy enthusiasm is taken as the evidence of spiritual depth. His work was as thorough and complete in detail as it was possible to be in the two or three weeks he gave to each parish. The mission was not a service in the morning, and another service in the evening. It was an all day and every day labor and he was in the thick of it from beginning to end. In fact, he did not consider the preaching of the mission to be his main work, but

the Confessions, the Communions, the classes and conferences. It was therefore not general impressions he aimed at, but the concrete, definite reform of each individual soul. Preaching by itself is not such hard work. It is following up the trail to find what the preaching has done that is hard. If this is absent, preaching can be just so much sounding brass. An account written in the *Woodstock Letters* by Father Frederick Garesché, who occasionally assisted in mission work, gives us an idea of the daily routine of their missionary life.

We commence the missionary year in September and end it in June. Toward the end of August the Fathers, who have been employing the interval in giving retreats to religious houses, in making their own retreats or in necessary relaxation, find themselves once more assembled in Chicago.

Let us follow one of the bands to a small mission. The missionaries commence their journey by the recitation of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. They arrive at their destination on Saturday. Trunks are to be opened, confessionals to be erected or ordered, for singularly enough this important adjunct to the mission is the very thing most generally overlooked. Finally the program of exercises is to be written or printed and then posted at the church door.

Usually this is as follows: At 5 o'clock A.M. begins the first Mass, followed by a sermon, which does not last longer than six o'clock, when the second missionary celebrates divine service. These early Masses are for those whose duties prevent them from being present later in the day. I have known the church to be filled at that hour, though the weather was inclement and many had to come from long distances. In no mission yet have we failed to persuade the people to make this daily sacrifice of their morning rest.

In one of our last missions, with the thermometer at 20 degrees below zero, the tramping of their feet on the frozen sidewalks would arouse us a half hour before the

time at which we had set our alarm clocks. At 8:30 A.M. the pastor celebrates Mass and immediately after this, the second sermon is delivered, the attendance being about the same, or even a little smaller than that of the 5 o'clock Mass. In the afternoon the pastor and congregation make the Way of the Cross together. In the evening at 7:30 the pastor recites the Rosary with the congregation, and then follows the principal sermon of the day, followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

During this sermon, in accordance with an invitation repeated for weeks together before the mission, the assistant missionary receives in the schoolroom, or the parlor of the pastoral residence, or some other place suitable, those persons over sixteen years of age who have never received their First Communion. I regard this as one of the greatest fruits of the mission, and decidedly the most trying and difficult of all our labors. The average of such cases is perhaps greater than you would suppose. In one mission where there were 1,100 communicants, and where the pastor was noted for his zealous care of his flock, knowing almost everyone by name, where, too, there was but little or no floating population, we unearthed about twenty such cases. I should think that the average would be about forty to every thousand communicants.

Every day, from two to three o'clock in the afternoon, or after the evening services, non-Catholics are invited to come and propose their doubts. On Tuesday we commence the Confessions, hearing first the children who have made their First Communion and are under sixteen years of age. On Wednesday and all other days that remain we are ready to hear Confessions from 5 o'clock A.M. until 10:30 at night. The only intermissions are for meals; a half hour after breakfast, an hour after dinner, and another hour, including supper, before the evening service.

Whenever the mission lasts two weeks, the first week is generally for the women, the second for the men, at least in regard to the evening service. Experience has taught that the separation has encouraged the men wonderfully and creates such an enthusiasm that ordinarily the number of communicants in each is about equal. Sometimes the

men's Communions are even more numerous than the women's.

Toward the end of the mission Father Damen usually establishes the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart and the Apostleship of Prayer and erects a large mission cross.

Father Damen is accustomed to give two controversial lectures each week. The utility of these lectures is very great, not only for Protestants, who attend in great numbers and whose prejudices are thereby much diminished, but principally for Catholics, who are wonderfully strengthened in their faith.

Pastors have great difficulty in reaching adults who have not made their First Communion, to have them come for the necessary instructions. The mission does a great deal for them here. It seems to overcome their shyness. They are told to come, and they do come in numbers, at night, and while Father Damen is delivering his mission sermon they are instructed by another missionary. So also with Confirmation. In most cases the Bishop administers this Sacrament after the mission, the pastors making the proper announcement beforehand and inviting all who have never been confirmed. But human respect often keeps them back. It is only after receiving the grace of the mission that they can muster courage to come to the feet of the Bishop.

Although Damen gave many missions in large parishes, yet he did not specially favor these at the expense of the smaller places. He listed his missions in the order of application and went everywhere precisely as his schedule directed. He realized then what is just as acute a need today, the necessity of missions in the smaller towns and settlements, where Catholics are frozen in by the cold prejudice and the ignorance of surrounding sects. The recent election campaign for the Presidency brought this fact clearly to the surface. It surprised many Catholics to see how much bigotry was in the country, especially in the smaller towns. But the missionaries who worked in such towns year after year were perfectly familiar with it, and were not at

all surprised. Catholics are outnumbered twenty to one in these localities, and though these twenty may disagree among themselves, they will always unite to attack the Catholic faith. In many cases, that is the only religion they have. Damen sought out these danger spots in the smaller towns, gave the full mission routine as accurately and delivered his sermons as tellingly as in the most crowded congregations. His classes for converts were as carefully conducted in Jeffersonville, where he records four negroes brought into the Church, as they were in New York, where he converted ninety-seven in a single mission.

It will be observed that in the list of missionaries mentioned as assistants to Father Damen in the mid-seventies, the name of Father Smarius is missing. Father Smarius died on March 1, 1870, at the age of forty-seven. He was the first Jesuit to die in Chicago. It was a severe blow to the missions. Smarius had arrived at the peak of his power, and the missions had just taken definite organized shape. Smarius had done much to bring them to this point and his loss was felt strongly by Damen, who had looked forward to long years of comradeship with Smarius on the missions. His name was a household word to all who had ever heard him and among the younger Jesuits he gave a great impetus to the desire for excellence in preaching.

The pace set by Damen and Smarius in the mission field continued, however, and the wonder created by their early successes gradually changed into a settled appreciation of the great spiritual worth of what they were doing for the Catholics of America.

In a manuscript notice of Father Damen, Father Thomas Hughes, S.J., writes:

A transient visitor at Chicago, in 1875, remarked 'that a letter which arrived while he was there, announced to Father Rector the happy conclusion of a mission at Scranton, with 12,000 Communions, 19 converts, 200 adult

First Communions, etc., but I found it was scarcely noticed, such items being commonplace there.' In 1879, after twenty-two years of excursions from Chicago, it was reckoned that Father Damen had conducted in person 208 missions, averaging two weeks time for each; he had traveled on an average of 6,000 miles each year; he and his different bands of companions together had given 2,800,000 Holy Communions and had made 12,000 conversions to the faith. At one church in New York, a party of his missionaries, in the course of four weeks, had distributed no less than 42,000 Holy Communions.

We may note here that among his converts, twenty-seven had been Protestant ministers. And Damen continued at the same rate for ten years after this time.

CHAPTER XIX

FATHERS DAMEN AND SMARIUS

THE great audiences that assembled around Damen and Smarius wherever they appeared were originally drawn by their eloquence. They heard the teachings of the Church and the duties of their moral lives presented to them in a manner which they had never experienced before. The style of each of the two was distinctly different. Smarius was more academic, ornate, lofty in flight, though always clear and logical and driving toward the point. Damen was more popular, concrete, simple in language and illustration. They belonged to two different schools of speaking, one of which could be represented, say, by Daniel Webster, the other by Abraham Lincoln. Smarius was Websterian, though of course entirely individual in his way of putting things; Damen, like Lincoln, instinctively turned to the more direct and homely style. The change of American taste with regard to speaking was arriving at just this period and, while many of the old campaigners still loved the rolling period and the balanced and sonorous Ciceronian manner, the current of popular favor was getting away from the formal to the familiar style. Damen and Smarius together on a mission appealed in turn to both preferences.

Damen seemed to think Smarius' sermons more efficient than his own, and he always gave him the place of importance in the schedule. Thus the evening sermons, considered the key sermons of the mission, he assigned to Smarius whenever he could. On occasions

when the crowds were so great that they had to be divided, Damen always took the smaller division.

Nevertheless, as time went on, it was Damen who gradually came into the foreground as the great speaker to the masses. Ultimately it was seen that he could do more with a congregation than could Smarius. Father James O'Meara, S.J., who is one of the few persons now living who heard both men at a time when he was old enough to judge critically, says of them:

'Fathers Damen and Smarius made a perfect team on the missions. The latter attracted crowds and won prestige by his distinguished presence and his power of eloquence. The former had the unction that converted hearts.' This idea was put in another way by Mr. William Onahan, who knew both speakers intimately; 'Smarius could hold an audience,' he writes, 'but Damen could carry them. Smarius possessed every quality of a great orator; he fascinated you. But Damen had something more than this. He took a personal grasp of you. You seemed to go out to Smarius, but Damen seemed to come into you.' All the evidence we have tends to show that Damen could exercise a spiritual sway over a congregation unique in his day and perhaps unequaled since. 'After listening to Damen,' said another who recalled his sermons, 'you didn't want to *think* about yourself. You wanted to *do* something about yourself and do it right away.'

St. Francis Xavier, in a letter to Father Gasper Baertz, giving him instructions how to preach to the people, writes the following:

> In your sermons make no display of erudition or of memory. . . . Let a great part of your discourse be taken up with graphic descriptions of the interior condition and the disorder of souls in a state of sin. Let your sermon set before their eyes, and let them see it plainly as in a mirror . . . all the deceitful designs which they entertain in their souls.

The truth is, that men listen attentively to those things above all which reach their inmost conscience. Sublime speculations, perplexed questions, scholastic controversies soar not only above the intelligence of those who are creeping on the ground, but above their interest. They make a deal of empty thunder and vanish without any fruit. You must show men clearly to themselves if you would have them hanging on the words of your mouth. But to set forth what their own interior feelings are, you must first know them; and the only way to know them is to be much in their company, to study them, observe them, pray with them. So turn over and over again these living books; it is from these you will gain everything.

Xavier wrote this out of his own experience. But if he had not, and could have foreseen Damen's work, he would have written these very words. Damen would have suited Xavier down to the ground. During Damen's whole priestly career of building, organizing, traveling, he had been much in the company of men and had passed by none of his exceptional opportunities of studying these living books. From these he learned how to reveal them to themselves with a startling vividness and a compelling power. When Damen aroused them to themselves, they saw themselves as they believed God Himself saw them.

Smarius excelled in clear presentation of doctrine, as well as in acute logical unmasking of error and its vigorous refutation. He surrounded a question completely and marched upon its solution with a sustained and deliberate eloquence that was often inspired. Damen's method was to cut through a position and to take it by a flaming assault. We can imagine the spiritual effect upon an audience that had listened to these two men through a mission of two weeks. It was a strategically perfect religious campaign. No Catholic with a shred of faith could escape from that combination.

We have a letter of Damen to his Superior, dated January 29, 1863, describing part of a mission tour he was making alone in Indiana and adjoining territory. It is the only one of his letters I have been able to discover that gives anything about his personal way of conducting a mission. It is only a flashlight at that, but it illuminates the manner of the man. He writes:

On the 9th of October I opened a mission in Evansville, Ind., to the English-speaking congregation, which is small. The pastor thought I might have 300 Communions. The mission was very well attended. All seemed to have given up all temporal concerns to attend to the one thing necessary, so that the sermons during the day were almost as well attended as those at night. I preached three times a day, was in the confessional from 6 o'clock in the morning until 11 and 12 o'clock at night. The Protestants attended in large numbers and seemed very much delighted with the sermons on the doctrines of the Church. Many declared that they were convinced that the Catholic Church was the only true Church and that they would inform themselves by reading and visits to the pastor, and join the Church later.

Six Protestants were baptized and prepared for First Communion. Others were postponed, not being sufficiently instructed. The six were married persons, and of course in gaining them we gain the children. We had 600 Communions, revalidated several marriages, invested with the scapular some four hundred persons and established the Society of the Sacred Heart. Some 200 persons joined.

On the 16th of October the mission concluded, at night, with a grand illumination and the consecration of the congregation to the Immaculate Mother. Then 24 young ladies, dressed in white, with long white veils and crowns of flowers on their heads, standing around the altar with tapers in their hands, read the renovation of the baptismal vows in a loud voice. There was a breathless silence in the church, interrupted only by the sobs of the people.

Then I made a second appeal to the people (for the

ceremony commenced with the sermon on Perseverance) and said:

'You have heard, my dear people, this solemn renunciation of Satan and his works. But you are able to speak for yourselves. Declare aloud before God, the blessed Jesus here on the altar, his holy angels around the holy tabernacle, the venerable Bishop, your good Pastor. Speak out. Do you renounce the devil?' There was a bursting out like the roar of thunder:

'We do renounce him.'

'And do you renounce all his works, that is, all sin?'

The same answer was given.

'Who shall be your leader and guide for the future?'

All said aloud, 'Jesus forever!'

All this was said with an abundance of tears and many sobs. It came to them so unexpectedly, not being prepared for it.

Then all the congregation arose and made the profession of faith aloud; after which all raised their hands to heaven, promised aloud that they would live and die in the Catholic Church. Then I gave the papal benediction.

The next morning at 8 o'clock we had a High Mass of thanksgiving. I bade them farewell, leaving them in tears, and was off in the cars to Columbus, Ind., a small place where I was four days. All the Catholics went to Communion. Some leaders of secret societies abandoned them and returned to the Church. Two Protestants became Catholics. Some apostates returned to the faith and many Protestants acknowledged that the Catholic religion is true. This place is visited but once a month.

Off I was to St. Vincent's Church, Shelby Co., where I remained five days. This is a small congregation in the woods of Indiana, settled by Kentuckian farmers. They have Mass once a month on Sunday. All the Protestants as well as the Catholics gave up their work to attend the mission. All the Catholics approached the Sacraments, two excepted. Many came a distance of 10 or 20 miles, bringing their dinners along and remaining at the church the whole day. I preached three times per day as usual and gave one hour catechism. Five Protestants were re-

ceived into the Church and some old people received their First Communion.

I regretted that I could not stay longer, for I had good grounds to believe that all the Protestants would become Catholics, if I had stayed 4 or 5 days longer. But my appointment was for Chicago, to preach the novena of the Immaculate Conception.

We placed a cross 30 feet high, twelve inches square, with the inscription: *Mission by the Jesuit Fathers, 1862,* although I was the only Jesuit there.

This close up, man-to-man style of dealing with people ran through all his work. It is evident in his letters, but those who listened to his sermons still recall the sense that he meant every word for them severally. 'I always felt,' said one, 'that he had me picked out from the crowd. He was on top of me all the time.' Everyone else thought the same thing. This power of universal personal appeal was the final natural source of Damen's effectiveness, and it showed at the same time his intimate understanding of human nature. He allowed nothing in the style or the manner of his sermon to interfere with this contact he was after. He was most sparing in the use of figures of speech, as if they were a veil before his thought. He said right out what he had to say, but with such downright intensity that he needed no figures. His vocabulary was simple; his sentences short, but so varied with dialogue, with rapid question and answer, anecdote and humor, that they never became monotonous. Even in reading the few lectures he has left us one is carried along with their interest. And always the sequence of his thought is so plain and logical that a hand can be laid on each section of its development and can gather the whole together as it proceeds. His meaning is as easy to follow as that of a child's penny book.

The style of Smarius was a perfect foil for Damen's. Smarius was clear, too, but not so easy to fol-

low. It requires a cultivated mind to appreciate its inner art and one must have a liking for the periodic style to appreciate him thoroughly. In reading Smarius, one feels rather too conscious of his style. Sonorous sentences that surge after one another like the waves of the ocean; thought dignified though impassioned; a colorful vocabulary that with a man of less ability could have become bombastic, and a personality equal to projecting all these with the greatest impressiveness.

As an example of Smarius' style, we shall quote from his funeral sermon delivered in 1860 at the grave of Governor William H. Bissel, who entered the Church in 1854 and who died in office as Governor of Illinois:

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.
APOCALYPSE, 14, 13.

Fellow Citizens:

Were I to echo the plaintive murmurs of the immense multitude by which I am surrounded on this solemn and impressive occasion; were I to answer, sigh for sigh, and sob for sob, as they come from the feeling hearts of the sympathizing friends and relatives of the illustrious departed, whose earthly remains lie enshrined in the tabernacle of death before me, I should have to choose another text than that which I have selected for this well-deserved, but alas, imperfect tribute of gratitude and love to the memory of William H. Bissel, the late governor of your flourishing state. For considering that the urn of grief has been opened and that it is fast being filled with the tears of respect and admiration, mixed with friendship and with love; considering that a whole state, nay, the nation, stands weeping over a loss which cannot immediately, perhaps never, be repaired, I should, consulting your natural feelings alone, find myself obliged to exclaim, in the language of seeming despondency, as did the King of Amalec in the days of yore, 'Doth bitter death separate in this manner?' or, in the equally melancholy expression of inconsolable grief, 'O death, how bitter is thy memory!' But when I reflect on the peculiar circumstances in which I find myself placed before this wreck

of earthly greatness, and in the midst of this scene of man's extreme littleness—the sepulchres of all the departed—I am forced to change the keynote of unavailing sorrow into the sounds of buoyant joy, and to cry out, with the Angel of the Apocalyptic vision, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!'

Yes, fellow citizens, blessed the illustrious dead whose demise you deplore. Blessed the faithful soldier, the dauntless warrior, who in days gone by, when the honor of his country was at stake, when the national insult was to be avenged, and foreign justice forced to an equipoise of her balance, drew his ready sword in defense of all her rights, and in defiance of all her boasting enemies; who girded himself with heroic courage and martyr fortitude for the battle, and modestly enjoyed the victories in which he had so large a share. Blessed, I repeat, is the faithful warrior, the dauntless hero, who, when his hour was come, yielded himself, a calm, a nobly resigned captive into the hands of the ingenious Conqueror of our race, whose power strikes with the same resistless force against the marble palaces of the great as it does against the thatched shanty of the lowlier and less favored subject. Blessed the dead, who, like Governor Bissel, after having legislated for others, are willing to fold up the scroll of laws, which, as the representative of their nation, they had the happiness to make or to approve for the prosperity of their constituents, and to submit themselves without repining to a higher law and a higher Lawgiver, whose stern decree was issued into this world under the shade of the beautiful and lovely trees of Paradise—'Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.' Blessed the dead, who like his excellency, now leveled down to our commonalty, although once filling the high places of power, and seated as it were on the throne of relative sovereignty, are nevertheless willing, yea, happy, to come down from those often dazzling heights and deceitful thrones to obey the summons of a Governor who ruleth not one state alone, but the heavens with all their magnificence, harmony and beauty, and the earth with all her varied scenes and scenery; yea, 'Blessed are the dead who, like this great, this beloved man, died in the Lord.'

After this majestic introduction, with its refrain that suggests the solemn tolling of a funeral bell, Smarius moves on to consider the life of Governor Bissel, coming finally to his conversion to the Church. He dwelt on some of the leading motives that influenced the Governor, particularly upon his vision of the Church's indefectibility, her power of lasting through all opposition. Here Smarius continues:

Then he looked back through the brilliant past of that glorious Church. He unrolled her parchments and deciphered her tell-tale hieroglyphics. He read of her as she was ushered into existence 1900 years ago, in the cenacle or supper-room at Jerusalem. He followed her gradual expansion under the scourges of the Sanhedrim, the stones of the Jewish mob, in the prisons of kings, in the arenas of emperors, and on the rack and torture, presided over by wicked governmental minions. He beheld her gory with the blood of thousands of confessors and millions of martyrs.

He followed her down the meandering avenues of the catacombs, and came forth with her from those subterranean caverns to seat himself by the side of her on the throne of the Constantines. He went with her on the difficult mission of civilization. He stood by her when she drove the Attilas back from the gates of the Eternal City, and when she bade Genseric respect her rights and those of her subjects. With her he was wondering at the more than human success with which she built on the ruins of ancient Rome another city of immortal memory.

Descending the stream of time he beheld along its banks the ruins of the mightiest dynasties, empires and kingdoms that ever swayed the destinies of nations, whose very names were wont to smite the heart of the bravest warrior with terror. He gazed upon those ruins and exclaimed in astonishment. 'How are the mighty fallen!' And then he turned himself to the proud monuments which the Church of Rome had built by the side of those ruins—monuments at which tyranny had aimed all its missiles of destruction, slander all its empoisoned shafts

of envy, and asked himself the question: How has Rome, pagan Rome, perished, and how has Catholic Rome survived the cruelty of ten pagan emperors, the savage vindictiveness of Goth and Visigoth, of Heruli and Vandal of Sueri and Almi? How stands she still, that despised, that execrated mistress of the Churches?

Then he turned his attention to Mohammed and his sanguinary caliphs. He saw them overrun the fairest portions of Asia, the populous part of Africa, he heard the tramp of Arabian steeds in the valleys of Spain and heard their clattering hoofs along the Pyrenean mountains. He wondered that Catholic Rome, the only earthly power to oppose the fanaticism of the Prophet of Mecca, should have succeeded in driving back from Tours, in France, his formidable legions, and defeated his unconquerable naval power in the battle of Lepanto. He read, he wondered, he said, 'The finger of God is there! The God of armies is with the Church of Rome!'

Floating down the same stream of ages, he beheld the power of intellect, of science, of literature, of art, arrayed against the Church of the Vatican. He read the lucubrations of a seeming philosophy, whose sages, like those of pagan Rome in its decline, sharpened their wit, and stirred up their bitterest sarcasm against the so-called absurd mummery and pomp of the religion of the Popes. Nothing could shake his deep-rooted convictions; nothing could break his strong, masculine faith in the Church of Rome.

Amid dissensions, he beheld her one and the same. Amid self-contradicting sects, he found her still the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church. When Napoleon vented his wrath of disappointed ambition against a defenseless old man seated on the Throne of the Caesars, he watched the issue and he saw a mighty tyrant lose the mightiest empire of the world, while Rome retained her own, her immortal empire of faith and love.

And in connection with Napoleon the First, he watched and studied the course of his nephew, Napoleon the Third. He, too, following in the footsteps of his uncle, is insidiously assailing the old man of Rome. But Governor Bissel conjectured what you will realize, that Napoleon the

Third will fail, as did Napoleon the First, and that the old man of Rome will live, even when his eldest, but rebellious son, shall have ceased to be.

Smarius, of course, in sermon or controversy, shifted his manner and tone to the question in hand. But the above extract, according to those who heard him, gives us a correct idea of his general style and treatment of a subject.

Damen is at the opposite pole. We have merely to read almost any passage from his lectures, and the difference becomes evident without any analysis. We select one from his lecture on *Church or Bible,* wherein he is proving that the Bible alone cannot be the teacher of mankind.

I say, then, that it is not the private interpretation of the Bible that has been appointed by God to be the teacher of men, but the Church of the living God.

For, my dear people, if God has intended that man should learn his religion from a book—the Bible—surely God would have given that book to man; Christ would have given that book to man. Did He do it? He did not. Christ sent his Apostles throughout the whole universe, and said:

'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' He never said to his Apostles, 'Go and write Bibles and distribute them and let everyone judge for himself. That injunction was reserved for the sixteenth century and we have seen the result of it. Ever since the sixteenth century there have been springing up religion upon religion, and churches upon churches, all fighting and quarreling with one another, and all because of the private interpretation of the Bible.

Christ sent His Apostles with authority to teach all nations, and never gave them any command to write the Bible, and the Apostles went forth and preached everywhere, and planted the Church of God throughout the earth, and never thought of writing.

The first word written was by St. Matthew, and he wrote for the benefit of a few individuals. He wrote the Gospel about seven years after Christ left this earth. So that the Church of God, established by Christ, existed seven years before a line was written of the New Testament.

St. Mark wrote about ten years after Christ left this earth, St. Luke about twenty-five years, and St. John about sixty-three years after Christ had established the Church of God.

The Catholic religion had existed sixty-five years before the Bible was completed, before it was written.

Now, I ask you, my dearly beloved separated brethren, were these Christian people who lived during the period between the establishment of the Church of Jesus and the finishing of the Bible, were they really Christians, good Christians, enlightened Christians? Did they know the religion of Jesus? Where is the man who will dare to say that those who lived from the time that Christ went up to heaven to the time the Bible was completed were not Christians? It is admitted on all sides, by all denominations, that they were the very best of Christians, the most perfect of Christians, the first fruit of the blood of Jesus Christ.

But how did they know what they had to do to save their souls? Was it from the Bible they learnt it? No, because the Bible was not written.

And would our Divine Saviour have left the Church for sixty-five years without a teacher, if the Bible is the teacher of men? Most assuredly not.

Were the Apostles Christians? I ask you, my dear Protestant friends. You say, 'Yes, sir, they were the very founders of Christianity.' Now, my dear friends, none of the Apostles ever read the Bible, not one of them, except perhaps St. John; for all of them had died martyrs for the faith of Jesus Christ and never saw the cover of a Bible; and every one of them died martyrs and heroes for the Church of Jesus before the Bible was completed.

How, then, did those Christians that lived in the sixty-five years after Christ had left this earth—how did they know what they had to do to save their souls? They knew

it in precisely the same way that you know it, my dear Catholic friends. You know it from the teaching of the Church of God and so did the primitive Christians know it.

Not only sixty-five years did Christ leave the Church He had established without a Bible, but over three hundred years. The Church of God was established and went on spreading itself over the whole globe without the Bible for more than three hundred years. In all that time the people did not know what constituted the Bible.

In the days of the Apostles there were many false gospels. . . . Even the learned themselves were disputing whether preference should be given to the Gospel of Simon or that of Matthew, to the Gospel of Nicodemus or that of Mark, to the Gospel of Mary or that of Luke, to the Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus or the Gospel of St. John.

The people were at a loss for over three hundred years to know which Gospel was false or spurious, or which inspired. And therefore they could not take the Bible for their guide, for they did not know what constituted the books of the Bible.

It was not until the fourth century that the Pope of Rome, the Head of the Church, the successor of St. Peter, assembled together the Bishops of the world in a council, and there in that council it was decided that the Bible as we have it now is the Word of God, that the Gospels of Sts. Luke, Matthew, Mark and John and the Book of Revelations were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Up to that time the whole world, for three hundred years, did not know what the Bible was; hence they could not take it for their guide, for they did not know what constituted the Bible.

Would our Divine Saviour, if He intended man to learn his religion from a book, have left the Christian world for three hundred years without that book? Most assuredly not.

Not only for three hundred years was the world left without the Bible, but for one thousand four hundred years the Christian world was left without the sacred book.

Before the art of printing was invented, Bibles were rare things; Bibles were costly things. Now, you must all

be aware, if you have read history at all, that the art of printing was invented only a little more than four hundred years ago, about the middle of the fifteenth century, and about one hundred years before there was a Protestant in the world.

As I have said, before printing was invented, Bibles were rare and costly things. Historians tell us that in the eleventh century—eight hundred years ago—Bibles were so rare and costly that it took a fortune, a considerable fortune, to buy one's self a copy. It took the lifetime of a man to make one's self a copy of the Bible! Before the art of printing, everything had to be done with the pen upon parchment or sheepskin. It was, therefore, a tedious and slow operation—a costly operation.

Now, in order to arrive at the probable cost of a Bible at that time, let us suppose that a man should work ten years to make a copy of the Bible and earn a dollar a day. Well, then, the cost of that Bible would be $3,650! Now, let us suppose that a man should work at the copying of the Bible for twenty years, as historians say it would have taken him at that time, not having the conveniences and the improvements to aid him that we have now. Then, at a dollar a day, for twenty years, the cost of a Bible would be nearly $8,000.

Suppose I came and said to you, 'My dear people, save your soul. For if you lose your soul, all is lost.' You would say, 'Sure enough, that is true!' You would ask, 'What are we to do to save our souls?' The Protestant preacher would say to you, 'You must get a Bible; you can get one at such a shop.' You would ask the cost, and be told it was $8,000. You would exclaim, 'The Lord save us! and cannot we go to heaven without that book?' The answer would be, 'No; you must have the Bible and read it.' You murmur at the price, but are asked, 'Is not your soul worth $8,000?' Yes, of course it is, but you say you have not the money, and if you cannot get a Bible, and your salvation depends upon it, evidently you would have to remain outside the Kingdom of Heaven. This would be a hopeless condition, indeed.

For fourteen hundred years the world was left without a Bible. Not one in ten thousand, not one in twenty thou-

sand before the art of printing was invented, had the Bible. And would our Divine Lord have left the world without that book if it was necessary to man's salvation? Most assuredly not.

Damen then goes on to show that even could all men read and had Bibles, they could not be sure of their faith, and proves his statement by an example. He says:

Let us suppose; here is an Episcopalian minister. He is a sincere, an honest, a well-meaning and prayerful man. He reads the Bible in a prayerful spirit, and from the words of the Bible, he says, it is clear and evident there must be Bishops, for without Bishops there can be no priests, without priests, no Sacraments and without Sacraments, no Church. The Presbyterian is a sincere and well-meaning man; he reads the Bible also, and deduces from it that there should be no Bishops, but only Presbyters. 'Here is the Bible,' says the Episcopalian. And, 'Here is the Bible to give you the lie,' says the Presbyterian. Yet both are prayerful and well-meaning men.

Then the Baptist comes in. He is a well-meaning, honest man, and prayerful, also.

'Well,' says the Baptist, 'have you ever been baptized?'

'I was,' says the Episcopalian, 'when I was a baby.'

'And so was I,' says the Presbyterian, 'when I was a baby.'

'But,' says the Baptist, 'it was done by sprinkling, and that is no Baptism at all. Unless you go down into the river, like Christ,' says the Baptist, 'it is no Baptism at all.' And he gives the Bible for it. 'Unless you are baptized over again,' says the Baptist, 'you are going to hell as sure as you live.'

Next comes the Unitarian, well-meaning, honest and sincere.

'Well,' says the Unitarian, 'allow me to tell you that you are a pack of idolaters. You worship a man for a God who is no God at all.' And he gives several texts from the Bible to prove it, while the others are stopping their ears that they may not hear the blasphemies of the

Unitarian. And they all contend they have the true meaning of the Bible.

Next comes the Methodist, and he says:

'My friends, have you got any religion at all?'

'Of course we have,' say they.

'Did you ever feel religion?' says the Methodist, 'the Spirit of God moving within you?'

'Nonsense,' says the Presbyterian, 'we are guided by our reason and judgment.'

'Well,' says the Methodist, 'if you never felt religion, you never had it and you will go to hell for all eternity.'

The Universalist next comes in and hears them talking and threatening one another with eternal hell fire.

'Why,' says he, 'you are a strange set of people. Do you not understand the Word of God? There is no hell at all. That idea is good enough to scare old women and children.' And he proves it from the Bible.

Next comes in the Quaker. He recommends them not to be quarreling and advises that they do not baptize at all. He is the sincerest of men, and gives the Bible for his faith.

Another comes in and says:

'Baptize the men and let the women alone. For the Bible says, *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* 'So,' says he, 'the women are all right, but baptize the men.'

Next comes in the Shaker, and he says:

'You are presumptuous people, a presumptuous set of people. Do you not know,' he says, 'that the Bible tells you, you must work out your salvation in fear and trembling and you do not tremble at all? My brethren, if you want to go to heaven, *shake*, my brethren, *shake*.'

All this seems very simple. But anyone who studies it, remembering the purpose Damen had in mind, will find his method and his language full of the art of the preacher who is above all things a teacher. The simple diction; the short sentence; clear and careful spreading out of the argument section by section, fitting each together toward a skillful climax; the apparently negli-

gent repetition of words and phrases that are really the key words and phrases he wishes to stamp upon his hearers' minds; the familiar, off-hand, easy-going dialogue, just the language appreciated by the man in the street; the confident yet friendly tone; the plain, good-natured humor, stingless, but very telling in its effect, these show Damen a master in the art of addressing the masses. The picture he draws of the confused convocation of religions makes one think of nothing so much as of a group of South Sea islanders, one wearing a shirt, another a hat, another a coat or a pair of shoes, another with a mirror or an umbrella, and each imagining he is perfectly dressed. Yet, though the whole picture is both ridiculous and true, we are left with no feelings of dislike or disrespect for the individuals in the picture. Comparing the styles of Damen and Smarius, one senses that Smarius could be difficult to follow, but that nobody could miss Damen.

This combination of Damen and Smarius is interesting, not only as showing how opposite two approaches to a subject can be, but historically it marks the sharp dividing line between two styles of oratory, one of which was leaving the scene, the other entering. Damen was probably the first great preacher in America who made exclusive use of the popular style. In this respect he was far ahead of his day. He brought the homily of the early Fathers of the Church back into its place. He reached the heart of the masses as perhaps no preacher has done since.

He made his thoughts so transparent that in listening to him no one ever thought of his style. One idea Damen had in his speaking, and that was, he was determined to be *clear,* to say what everyone not only could understand, but could not help understanding. He deliberately stripped his language of every ornament, therefore, that might load it down and impede the movement of his thought. He laid aside the cumber-

some armor of Saul for the sling of David, but he always toppled his giants. His language had life, momentum, direction and speed. It traveled on an air line, straight for its destination. And it had the power of carrying with it all who came within its magic circle. While fully sustaining the dignity of his subject, he succeeded nevertheless in bringing its meaning down to the capacity of the humblest of his hearers.

'His was an eloquence,' wrote one who knew him well, 'that carried the multitude with irresistible force. His stately figure, his powerful, yet musical and sympathetic voice; above all, his heart, strong in its affections, and his soul's convictions, with its deep inspiring fervor, combined nature and grace to make up that characteristic piety possessed by Father Damen, which made him in all the missions the most successful preacher to the masses of the people.'

CHAPTER XX

A TEACHER OF MEN

THE words we have quoted at the close of the preceding chapter indicate that Damen's striking personality was the large factor in his success. It is really talking platitudes to say this, because no speaker can begin to succeed without what we vaguely call 'personality.' In other words, as we commonly and much more clearly put it, he must 'have something.' Damen had that 'something.' When he stood in the pulpit, before uttering a syllable, he gave the impression of giant power. But at the same time this was blended with a sweetness, an innocence, a friendliness that welled forth from him and spread with his power. So that as the people looked at him, they knew that he loved them. They felt that he was there to help them, not to hurt them, and they surrendered on the spot. There was indeed, about Damen, nothing whatever of that false zeal which is only a symptom of an inner irritation of spirit. Hence he could never scold, be bitter, indulge in invective, or work himself into a fanatical frenzy. On the other hand, though he always was in his speech homely and familiar, he never approached the irreverential or the vulgar. He could, and he did, say strong things, but he so tempered them with humor, with little terms of affection and, above all, with the tones of his voice, that he never inflicted a wound. He respected at all times the dignity of the human soul. And when he finished an argument, or concluded an exposition of a falsehood, no matter how helpless he left the opposition, he never left the impression that it was Damen

personally who had triumphed. It was the truth of the Church that had been vindicated.

This spirit of confidence and trust that arose in an audience with the mere presence of Damen, enabled him to open his talks without much preamble of warming up to his subject, or any of the laborious verbal technique of building up a friendly contact with his hearers. His sermons began without an overture. He was on his subject with his first sentence and kept after his point with great force and directness all the way. His audiences were so carried along with him that they never wearied, even though standing, and they never seemed to notice the time, even though he sometimes preached for two hours. Bishop Murphy says, 'He held this wonderful power of making an audience forget everything but what he was telling them, up to the end of his life. Often he was thrilling, but never was he less than interesting.'

In his long talks he had a way of introducing episodes, connected with his main subject indirectly, but brought in as a short relief or rest. These short detours, unexpected and apparently spontaneous, often made the deepest impression on his audience. Thus, in his lecture on Confession, intended for non-Catholics, he suddenly turns and attacks the sources of their misinformation.

My dear Protestant friends, if you would only take the trouble to examine both sides of the question. But here is your misfortune: you are a one-sided people; you never examine both sides of the question. Tell me candidly, now, did you ever read a Catholic book in your life?

'No, sir, I would not take up a Catholic book.'

'But you have read a great many books against Catholicity?'

'Yes, I have, and that is the very reason I do not want to read any more about it.'

Well, that shows you are a one-sided people. How can

you give an impartial judgment when you have examined but one side of the question? What would you say of a judge who sits in the criminal court, when a policeman brings in a poor fellow and says to the judge:

'Judge, this man is guilty of such and such a crime.'

'Well, then, hang him,' says the judge.

'But,' says the poor man, 'Judge, I am innocent, and I am able to prove my innocence. I am able to bring you evidence and witnesses to prove my innocence.'

But the policeman insists that he is guilty.

'Well, then,' says the judge, 'hang him anyhow.'

What would you say of such a judge? 'Ah,' you would say, 'unjust, cruel, bloodthirsty man, you are guilty of shedding innocent blood! Why do you not hear the man? Why do you not hear his evidence, and his witnesses and his proofs? You are guilty of the blood of an innocent man and you have condemned him without examination.'

'Well, now, my dear Protestant friends, allow me to tell you (and I hope you will not be offended, for no man of sense can be offended by the truth) that is the way you have been treating the Catholics all the time. 'Hang them anyhow,' you say. Did you ever examine the doctrines of our holy religion? Did you ever read a Catholic book? Never in your life. And then you condemn us—condemn us without knowing what we are. Is that the part of a sensible man? Is that just, I ask you? It is very hard to tell you that you have been acting so unjustly to us Catholics; but certainly none of you can be offended, for you know it is a fact. You have been condemning us; you have been turning us into ridicule; you have been holding us up to the odium of the people, without knowing what the Catholic religion is at all. That is the way Jesus Christ was treated and that is the way you are treating the followers of Jesus Christ. Oh, my dear Protestant friends, do become more just, more fair, more honest and charitable toward your fellow man. Condemn him not without knowing that he really deserves to be condemned. Do not examine one side of the question, but give a fair hearing to both sides. Do I ask anything unreasonable? Is that not fair and just?

Again he will clinch a point by a story, nearly always taken from his own experiences, bringing right before the eyes of his hearers the practical side of the truth he is advancing. In showing the disruptive results of denying the authority of the one Church, he illustrates it with the following:

When I gave my mission in Flint, Michigan, I invited, as I have done here, my Protestant friends to come and see me. A good and intelligent man came to me and said: 'I avail myself of this opportunity to converse with you.'

'What Church do you belong to, my friend?' said I.

'To the Church of the Twelve Apostles,' said he.

'Ha, ha!' said I. 'I belong to that Church, too. But tell me, my friend, where was your Church started?'

'In Terre Haute, Indiana,' says he.

'Who started the Church, and who were the twelve Apostles, my friend?' said I.

'They were twelve farmers,' says he. 'We all belonged to the same Church—the Presbyterian—but we quarreled with our preacher, separated from him and started a Church of our own.'

'And that,' says I, 'is the twelve Apostles you belong to—the twelve farmers of Indiana!'

That Church came into existence about fifteen years ago. A few years since, when I was in Terre Haute, I asked to be shown the Church of the Twelve Apostles. I was taken to a window and it was pointed out to me.

'But it is not in existence any more,' said my informant. 'It is used as a wagon maker's shop now.'

Damen strongly favored the dramatic method of presenting a subject. It made for action. Damen was not a spotlight soloist nor a monologue artist. He would not take the chance of the monotony of a monologue to let his audience drowse off or drift away from him. They were as much a part of his sermons as he was. So when he was not doing a dialogue with some imaginary outsider, he had the audience up in the pul-

pit with him. He made them an essential part of his sermon. He made them talk to him, argue with him. And when he had them up close, it is remarkable how much clearer Catholic teaching he could pack into a brief space and give them in a manner that they could not forget it. In his *Answers to Popular Objections against the Church*, he thus takes up the question of the worship of images in the Church:

'Again,' says my Protestant friend, 'I could never be a Catholic, because the Catholics violate the first Commandment of God. That commandment says—*Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, nor on the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore, nor worship them.* Now, you Catholics violate that command of God, and there is no slander about this. You have only to go to the Catholic Church to find the evidence. What is that over their altar there? The image of Christ crucified—a likeness of the things in the heavens above. And what is that there? The image of St. Ann, the mother of the Blessed Virgin. And that? That is St. John the Baptist, and therefore the likenesses of the things in the heavens above. Therefore you Catholics violate the commandments of God by making those images and statues.'

'Well, my dear reverend minister of the Gospel, my dear preacher, will you allow me to come to your home?'

'Yes,' says he, 'I have no objection to let even an old Jesuit come to my house.'

I go, and walk into my friend's drawing room, and point to a painting on the wall, and ask, 'What painting is that?'

'That,' says he, 'is the portrait of my dear mother.'

'Where is your mother now?'

'I hope,' says he, 'that she is in heaven with God.'

'What is that painting?'

'That is the likeness of my darling wife.'

'Where is she?'

'She is upstairs in the nursery with her little ones.'

'And that other painting over the door?'

'Well, sir, that is an oil painting of one of the great masters. It represents a fish.'

'Why, my dear Protestant minister, what a breaker of God's commandments *you* are! There is the likeness of your mother, who you say is in heaven above; there is the likeness of your wife, who is on the earth beneath; and there is that fish, the likeness of the things in the waters under the earth!'

'Foolish, foolish priest!' says he. 'Do you think that because I have those pictures hanging up there that I break the commandment of God?'

'No, my friend, I do not. But you say that we Catholics break it by having the pictures in the church.'

'There is no harm to make them,' he says, 'but you adore them.'

'Here you slander us. We do not adore any of the images in the church.'

'Why have you them then?'

'Why have you the portrait of your mother?'

'Because,' says he, 'whenever I look at it, I remember how good a woman she was. It seems to say to me, *Be good; be a Christian.* When I look at that picture, I feel myself excited to practice all the virtues of which she has given me the example. I remember all the good lessons she used to give me.'

'Why, you are a Catholic, my friend! This is precisely the use Catholics make of the pictures and the statues in the church. When the Catholic looks at the image of Christ crucified, he says, *See what the Saviour has suffered for me—how he has shed out His precious blood to save my soul. I must, therefore, love Jesus.* Whenever the Catholic looks at the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he says—*How pure, how holy and how chaste was Mary, the Mother of Jesus. I must endeavor to imitate her purity in the service of God.* When we look at the statue of St. Joseph or of any other saint, we say—*These saints were men as we are. They lived in the same world, had the same passions and the same difficulties to contend with as we have, but in spite of all these, they were faithful to God.* I can do the same, says the Catholic. I must, there-

fore, make an effort to imitate their virtues and copy their example.'

'But,' says my Protestant friend, 'you bow down before them. Have I not seen Catholics in this church, during this mission, bowing to that image over the altar?'

'No, not to the image, but to Jesus, whom they believe to be in the holy Tabernacle. The Catholic bows, not to the image, but bends his knee in homage to Jesus Christ. Is that wrong, my dear friend?'

'No,' says the Protestant, 'for at the name of Jesus the Bible tells us that every knee shall bow in heaven and earth and even in hell. But you bow also to the statue of the Blessed Virgin,' says he.

'No, not to the statue, but to the one represented by the statue—the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.'

'Is not Mary a creature?'

'Yes, a creature, but an exalted and holy creature.'

'Well,' says the Protestant, 'you must not bow to any creature.'

'Why, my dear man, when I first came to Ottawa, I met you in the street one day—you were pointed out to me as the minister of such and such a church. I watched you as you went along, and you met a friend, a lady, and in a moment you had your hat in your hand and bowed politely to her.'

'Yes, sir, but she is such a nice creature, she is such a good and pious person, and we should respect virtue and piety. And therefore I bowed to her.'

'And is not the Blessed Virgin good and holy, and should I not bow to her and honor her exalted dignity as the Mother of God?'

'Well, yes, that, after all, appears to be pretty reasonable. But you Catholics overdo the thing. You make too much fuss about the Blessed Virgin. You cannot find a Catholic church with an altar to God in it, in which there is not one to the Blessed Virgin also. I think that is wrong, sir.'

'Well, my dear Protestant friend, suppose for a moment that the mother of George Washington were to come to New York on a visit. What excitement and fuss there would be there! Roaring of cannon and firing of

pistols and bands of music marching through the streets and bonfires and illuminations. The ladies of New York dressed up in the grandest possible style, and in beautiful carriages rolling through the streets of New York. Should I say—Ladies, what is all this fuss and excitement about? Where are you going? They would answer, Sir, we go to pay our respects to the mother of Washington. She has put up at the Astor House and we go to see her. —Well, ladies, I would say, why is the mother of Washington more than any other women that you should thus honor her?—Oh, sir, they would say, it is easy to see you are a Dutchman! What, sir! you say not honor the mother of Washington who has given us so great a son, a son who has made us a free, independent, glorious and prosperous people?—All right, say I, go and honor the mother of Washington. I love to see gratitude in the hearts of the people.

'But tell me, my friends, has not Mary given us a greater son than Washington? Has not Jesus done more for us than Washington? Has not He delivered us from the slavery of hell and made us heirs of heaven? And would not we Catholics be an ungrateful people if we did not respect the Mother that has given us so great a Son?

'Well, I declare,' say my Protestant friends, 'that is pretty reasonable after all.'

But although Damen in his controversial sermons was a most effective and popular teacher of Catholic doctrine, it was in his non-controversial sermons that he showed his greatest power. When he turned from presenting truth merely to the mind of his hearers, and entered the practical field of conscience, he was at his best. Here, too, he followed the same method of direct, plain, forceful address, but here his faith, and fervor and his love of God and God's law had full play. All accounts agree that there was no one like Damen who could turn the soul in upon itself and force it to realize its sins, its shortcomings in the service of God. He

made sin, its punishments, its ingratitude, so keen and so personal a presence to all who listened to his thrilling appeals, that he roused them to immediate action. They wanted to go to Confession at once, to shake off forever their habits of sin, to start their lives over, to love God from the bottom of their hearts. Scenes such as these witnessed the conclusion of every one of his sermons of the mission. Unfortunately, we have nothing of these sermons left us except the notes he spoke from, outlines that show us the orderly progress of the sermon and its close adherence to the lines of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. But there can be no doubt of their extraordinary power when vivified by the personality of the man.

When a youth I entered Holy Family Church, Chicago, during a mission [writes Mr. Joseph Sheridan], Father Damen was preaching in a pulpit that stood in front of the Communion railing. I heard his powerful voice near the door just as plainly as if I were within a few yards of him. He held a large bandanna handkerchief in his hand. The impression of that particular sermon is vivid in my recollection. His appeal was wonderfully, exceptionally dramatic. He thoroughly understood the art of arousing the dormant religious sentiments of his audience. My mother relates that once when Father Damen was preaching on the enormity of mortal sin, a man stood up in the pew crying aloud, 'I am in mortal sin! I am in mortal sin!'

Father Hillman, who was a co-laborer with Damen on many of his missions, used to say that he never failed to be impressed by Father Damen's sermons, no matter how many times he heard them.

Mother Sheridan, of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, heard Damen preach when she was a young girl.

Who that ever heard his heart-stirring appeal at the close of his mission [she writes], could possibly forget it?

When he raised his large crucifix and prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ for mercy on his erring children, pleading with Him by His precious blood, His wounds, His heart's love, who could resist? Then when he turned to the congregation and begged them to return to their God, their Friend, their Saviour, strong men wept hot tears and hundreds of stricken souls laid down their burden of sin where God's holy absolution brought pardon and peace. And this scene was no piece of idle rhetoric. Father Damen's whole being went into the prayer—his faith, his earnestness, his love of souls, all showed that he considered their salvation a matter of tremendous moment, a matter of life and death.

Mother Herbert, also a Sacred Heart nun, heard Damen when but a child of eight years, and carried the memory of that sermon all her life.

After a thrilling sermon on the Passion [she tells us] he held aloft in the pulpit a huge crucifix and addressed the Saviour as follows: 'My God, it was my sins of wantonness and rebellion, leading me to occasions of sin that caused those fearful wounds in your sacred Feet; my refusal to walk to Sunday Mass drove the nails deeper and deeper; my cursing, swearing, my uncharitable and blasphemous speech that caused the awful parching of your sacred lips ——' as he went on, the sobs and cries that broke forth from the congregation of men and women were terrifying to me. The words 'wantonness and rebellion' never left my memory. And then the sublimity of the act of contrition, said aloud with him, left an impression on my eight years that will never be effaced. That deep, earnest, sonorous voice of his drove his words into the soul of everyone present.

When such ineradicable impressions could be made upon children hardly awakened to the meaning of sin, it is easy to see how deeply Damen must have stirred souls with a long record of sin through their lives, as he awoke them to their condition and, as Xavier said, showed them clearly to themselves, as in a mirror.

The note of terror which rang through parts of Damen's sermons like the trumpets of the last judgment, might be considered somewhat too severe for more modern, and perhaps more *blasé* taste. But there is no doubt that Damen's practical use of it was understood by, and was effective with, his audiences. Had he seen that it was not practical he would not have used it. Damen believed in getting results and he would allow no hobby to interfere with that ideal. He was, therefore, not an *a priori* terrorist in the pulpit. He could be cool, argumentative, humorous, reminiscent, appealing and, as those who remember tell us, sublime. His wish was not to drive his hearers into hysterics, but into definite spiritual action, and as anyone who has had experience of mission work knows, there are plenty who need the driving. The metropolitan papers of the day called Damen the Catholic Beecher, but this is exceedingly faint praise for the kind of work Damen aimed at, which was to open a path into souls for the grace of God. He did not consider himself a preacher but an apostle, a teacher of divine truth to men. He knew he was laying foundations, not building airy pinnacles or chiseling delicate traceries. And he adapted his language and his method and manner to this precise work. Heavy storms was the prevailing weather in the seas that Damen rode, and to meet it he sailed under bare poles. Delicate phraseology, rounded sentences, balanced periods, flights of fancy,

> Jewels five words long
> That on the stretched forefinger of all time
> Sparkle forever,

were all gewgaws to Damen in his thirsting quest of souls. He pushed these to one side as tools useless for blasting the rock. Not that he underestimated the power of language. On the contrary, he used it with consum-

mate skill, fitting it exactly to the purpose and the people to whom it was addressed. Souls were a matter of life and death to him and in matters of life and death, Damen's speech is the kind that a man who rises to the situation will use.

CHAPTER XXI

A CRITICISM AND ITS ANSWER

DAMEN'S course through his missions was not altogether without criticism. One of the criticisms he had to meet came from some of his Jesuit *confrères* concerning his method of obtaining money. We have seen what his financial troubles were in the founding of his Chicago parish, the building of the great church, the group of schools, and the college, with their constant demand for equipment, for teachers and the steady drain of overhead expense; this, too, amid a population, who, though generous to their last penny, could not, out of their own immediate resources, keep up with the money speed that the growing city demanded. Damen was the center of this entire system, responsible for seeing it through and for carrying his people along with him. He was building for the future and as a consequence he was nearly always in debt. The only thing he could do, finally, was to make appeals for help while on his missions. With the permission of the pastors in whose parishes he gave missions, he explained to the people his difficulties, told them what he was trying to do at home, and asked their assistance. They understood him and they helped him. It was principally with such donations that he built the college.

After his missions, too, he often gave a special lecture for which admission was charged, and part of this went to his building fund. All this, though a normal procedure in the ordinary American way of doing things, was a source of anxiety to some of Damen's

superiors. There is a Jesuit rule directing that no spiritual work of any member of the Society shall be done under anything like an understanding that it must be paid for in money. Alms may be taken or gifts freely made, but there must be nothing like a *quid pro quo,* a hire and salary contract in any sense. This idea of charging for lectures seemed to be something like such a contract. Complaints were made about it to superiors. It was reported to them also that Father Damen talked too often in money terms about his Chicago enterprises. Father Keller, who was termed by the then Visitor, Father Murphy, 'a rather severe appraiser of men and things,' wrote about both Smarius and Damen, criticizing the former for his 'bluntness in speaking of sins of impurity and for what sounds like personal invective in his controversial sermons on Protestantism'; and the latter for his 'eagerness to collect money for his Chicago buildings in the Holy Family parish.' However, he concluded his comment by saying, 'Perhaps we are too timid, too cautious. Certainly, if you can here apply the maxim, *By their fruits ye shall know them,* we shall have to confess that these Fathers are dear to God and are led by the spirit of God.'

The General, Father Beckx, wrote in 1870 to Father Coosemans that from what he could judge, Damen was too much after money, though his work otherwise was altogether admirable. Criticisms of this nature trickled in from time to time, and indeed could have been expected from those who did not realize the straits Damen was frequently in to support his spreading work in Chicago. Damen himself believed that after his explanation of these difficulties to his audiences, all the assistance they offered him was done purely of their own free will. In 1875, however, a formal complaint was made to the General to the effect that the missions directed by Father Damen were undertaken for the

sake of gain. Besides their necessary expenses, it was said, the missionaries obtained money from the sale of books, which 'like traveling merchants, they carried with them,' and by public lectures given in the church for money immediately after the close of the mission. 'Toward the close of the mission,' the statement continued, 'a sermon on Purgatory is given to arouse pity for the souls in Purgatory. Then the people are exhorted to buy an admission ticket—for the lecture—for each of the departed souls of their relatives. The tickets of admission are sold for fifty cents and the total is divided between the pastor and the missionary. Then it is announced to the people that those who buy tickets become benefactors of the college of St. Ignatius in Chicago. In the year 1873 the priests of the diocese of X. were so scandalized that they would have denounced the matter to your Paternity had they not been dissuaded by the Vicar General. But that same Vicar General considered it unworthy of the Society.'

It was asserted, also, that the Bishops censured the practice severely, and that the Provincial said that he 'could not hinder Father Damen from the acquisition of money' because, the writer explained, 'he feared Father Damen and the money lovers.'

These criticisms were reported back from the General to the Province authorities, who in turn laid them before Father Damen. After a full discussion of the matter together, they requested him to write, with their approval, an explanation to the General. Damen wrote as follows:

CHICAGO, August 17, 1875.

Very Reverend and dear Father, P.C.:

The Very Rev. Father Provincial has read before Father Rector and Consultors of Chicago two letters from your Paternity concerning the selling of books of piety and of instruction, which takes place during the

missions; and concerning the lectures, which take place after the missions. I have explained to them the manner and the reasons of these two things and after my explanation all decided that these two things ought to be continued *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. And Rev. Father Provincial ordered me to explain to you matters as they are.

1. That which concerns the sale of books: We have nothing to do with that; it is the curé or parish priest who chooses anything for sale, books of piety, etc., rosaries, medals and other pious objects. The profit from the sale is applied by the parish priest either to his church or to his school or to the poor. We have nothing to do with that. It is the affair of the curé or pastor of the church, and by no means our affair. The same thing is done in all the missions given by other missionaries of other Religious Orders. The only profit we derive is the copyright on the books written by our Fathers (FF. Weninger and Smarius) and this amounts to a mere trifle. Nevertheless, this gives us the means of giving alms now and then, and of giving *gratis* books of instruction to Protestants. The parish priests and Bishops wish this absolutely, and they have need of it for their schools and churches. Father Weninger will tell you the same.

Now as regards the lectures after the missions:

1. It is the custom in this country, in the United States and in Canada, to invite orators and popular speakers who have some reputation to give controversial, dogmatic or historical lectures to which they charge an admission of fifty cents. And the money is given for building churches and schools, for hospital aid, for orphan asylums, for the poor, etc., etc. It is a method of obtaining means, alms for works of piety, of religion, of mercy, of charity, approved by the Archbishops and Bishops, the Catholics and Protestants. All do it.

2. All the churches, schools and religious institutions are heavily burdened with debts, and the Bishops or parish priests beg me ordinarily to give a lecture after the mission for their aid in the embarrassment in which they find themselves to keep up the schools of the parish, or to pay the interest on their church debts, or to support the orphans, or something of that nature. I never refuse

them and they give me half of the proceeds of the lecture to help pay the debts of our establishment in Chicago.

3. I never give that kind of lecture unless the Bishops and parish priests desire it. If the Bishops and the parish priests do not desire it, it is not done.

4. Persons have written you that the Bishops and vicars general have condemned this kind of lectures. *That is false.* Because this very Bishop concerning whom they have written you, when I gave a mission in his cathedral, begged me earnestly to continue giving these lectures in his diocese, and to begin in the episcopal city after the mission, to aid his schools—that he could not support his schools without this means. It has likewise been told you that the vicar general of this diocese had condemned the practice of these lectures, but this is *false.* They should have told you that this was the *jealousy* of an *ex-Jesuit,* Rev. Mr. X, of the province of Maryland, who has spoken against this to the vicar general. But after that the Bishop told me not to pay attention to these remarks of this ex-Jesuit and to continue to give lectures for the instruction of his people and for the support of works of piety and of charity.

5. You have also been told that the reputation of our Society will suffer from this and that it is looked upon more as a money-making affair than to do good to the souls of our fellow men. Response: If this is true, why do the Archbishops, Bishops and parish priests think so highly of our missions? To make sure of our services they are obliged to invite us one or two years in advance. I have at present applications for missions for the year 1877. I am obliged to refuse half the invitations for missions because all our time is taken up. If I could double myself and give four missions at a time, at the same time, I would not be able to satisfy all the demands which press upon me for coming to their help. Is not this a refutation of the accusation that my method of giving the missions with lectures is harmful to the good name of our Society? For 18 years I have been engaged in giving missions in the United States and Canada, and always in the principal churches and cathedrals. Everywhere the Bishops and priests always ask me to come back. There was a Bishop

who was very much opposed to the Society and who would not permit Jesuits to enter his diocese, especially after the Vatican Council. Well, by dint of entreaties of two of the most venerable priests of his diocese he allowed me to give two missions, which produced such fruits that this same Bishop invited me to preach the jubilee in his cathedral. And now this Bishop is our greatest friend, and desires, when we pass through the episcopal city, that we always lodge at the episcopal palace. And he makes us ride in the episcopal carriage. Another Bishop does not permit the Jesuits to exercise any jurisdiction in his diocese, except the Jesuits of our province. I have given twenty missions in his diocese with much fruit. I ask you, my Rev. Father, if our missions were not popular and were not approved by the Bishops, would they have continued to invite us, for 18 years, to come to their aid by our method of conducting missions?

6. I am strongly persuaded, if your Paternity forbids our giving lectures after the missions, that the Bishops and parish priests will no longer invite us to conduct missions, because all have the greatest difficulty in keeping up their parochial schools, which cost them a great deal. They receive nothing from the government and they are obliged to engage professors at a high salary. At the same time they cannot permit the children to frequent the public schools. And the lectures help them very much. The other missionaries of other Religious Orders do the same thing. Likewise, to interrupt the giving of lectures as we have done up to the present is to interrupt the missions and stop the invitations for giving them. I am astonished that you allow yourself to be led by a Father who has only five months experience of missions, instead of taking the advice of those who have conducted missions for eighteen years with great fruit and edification. I am completely indifferent as to continuing or abandoning the lectures after the missions, but I assure you that we will be forced to abandon the English missions.

7. You have likewise been told that at the end of the missions we preach a sermon on Purgatory. Yes, we always preach a sermon on Purgatory or on venial sin, but

not at the end of the mission. This we judge necessary, because if people commit venial sins voluntarily they will not preserve themselves long from mortal sin. And what harm is there in that? Is it wrong to incite men to avoid venial sin, and to be merciful to the dead?

If your Paternity were here and saw things as they are I am sure you would approve our manner of acting in the missions. Moreover, I ought to tell you that I always announce to the people that, since the Bishop or the parish priest gives us half the revenue from the lecture to help us pay the debt on our establishment in Chicago, they will participate in the prayers and Masses which we, according to our rule, say for our benefactors.

Well, my Rev. Father, I have written you, through obedience, a long letter, and I hope that you will read it attentively. And I am perfectly indifferent as to your decision. I shall follow it most exactly; but I surely believe, if you forbid the lectures after the missions, that our missions, especially in the large cities, have come to an end.

I recommend myself to your Sacrifices and prayers.

Your Reverence's least servant,

A. DAMEN, S. J.

This answer of Damen placed the situation in an entirely different light. Damen had not peddled books, nor given the scandal reported, nor played in a deceptive manner on the religious sympathy of his audiences. He had gone about everything in a simple, straightforward way, using nothing but the methods familiar to and accepted by the American people. The General understood Damen's letter and went with him on all points except the matter of the lectures. On this point he advised Damen to discontinue the admission fee for these, even though it was a recognized custom in America. Damen obeyed at once.

What Damen felt most keenly in the report, however, was not the criticism of his methods, but the intimation that in the event of pressure being brought to bear on

him to make a change in his system, he would be found wanting in obedience. The fact is that Damen was scrupulously obedient and always, as in the case here, followed the wishes of superiors like a child. He could present his views vigorously, but when the final decision came, there was no further question in his mind as to what he should do.

The idea that he was a lover of money, he likewise considered to be unjust, as an attack upon his poverty. He had, it is true, gathered money, and in large amounts for that day. But he had never kept or used a penny of it for himself. He could account for every dollar that had been given to him. It had been all turned back to the people in another form, in buildings, in charity, in religious and educational enterprises. Damen never owned nor claimed a dollar of all the money he handled. His personal bank account was always at zero. He used money with the skill of a man with an unusual business talent, but he looked upon himself merely as the steward of his people, to whom he was responsible. And these, on their part, not only trusted him absolutely, but were astonished at the extraordinary results of his wise investments. Even what he might legally have claimed as his own, the earnings of his individual efforts, he paid into the general fund as his personal contribution to the work. From no logical point of view could he be called a 'money lover.'

However, he was not again seriously disturbed in the conduct of the missions. While he felt keenly what he believed to be the injustice of the criticism, he did not allow it to clog his energy, and interfere with his work. He shook off any temptation to brood over the charges, and went ahead as though nothing had been said. And the Lord blessed his effort with even greater success than at any previous time. Contrary to his prediction, the omission of the lectures at the close of

missions, did not affect their fruitfulness. Just the opposite happened. During the years immediately succeeding, his missions reached the peak of their power and the harvest he gathered was more abundant than ever before.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME MEMORIES OF FATHER DAMEN

DURING the years from 1869 to 1872, Damen was the acting President of St. Ignatius College, as well as missionary and pastor of the Holy Family parish. This looks like an impossible trinity of occupations, and for anyone with a less capacious energy than Damen's, it would have proved so. He managed all three until the young college had made a promising beginning, when he was succeeded as President. The General, in announcing this change as being necessary through the incompatibility of the two positions of missionary and college president being directed simultaneously by the same man, commends Father Damen for his 'tireless patience, and for the prudence and the fortitude under difficulties material and spiritual, by which he has brought all his work to so high a degree of efficiency.' Damen still remained pastor of the church and missionary. Even this combination would seem an incongruous one. As missionary, he must be away from home, and he actually was away for nine months of the year. As pastor he must be at home among his people. It is difficult to imagine a pastor, absent from home three fourths of the time, who would not lose contact with his parish work; indeed, who would not be all but forgotten by his parishioners. But with Damen it was different. His spirit had leavened the parish so thoroughly that whether abroad or at home, he seemed always present to the people. He was to them like the father of a family whose name and whose influence is never forgotten in the house-

hold, no matter where he happens to be. Father O'Meara gives us a clear idea of how Damen was regarded at that time in Chicago:

I was at St. Ignatius College in 1879-1880 as Professor of Poetry. And on Christmas Eve of that year ten Fathers were kept busy hearing Confessions up to midnight in the church. At that period that parish was in the full swing of prosperity, and all the people were enthusiastic about Father Damen. It was 'Damen's church' and 'Damen's parish,' founded out in the prairie and gathered and established in three years, 1857-1860, when the grand church was solemnly dedicated. It was asserted in the papers of that year, that the parish of Father Damen had extended Chicago to twice its size; that Father Damen had found it a town and had made it a city.

Results like these could not, of course, have been attained without the able and unselfish co-operation of many others, which Damen knew how to secure and which he gratefully acknowledged and depended on. But they, too, had the advantage of being 'armed with his crested and prevailing name' that cleared the way for their advance.

And so when Damen returned from his missionary tours, it was a great homecoming for the parish. They knew when he was to arrive and they were awaiting him, like one of the old sea captains coming back to his home port and his family after a distant voyage.

The church was filled to receive him.

When he came back from his big missions, [says Father William Wallace] to his 'dear home,' his 'dear Holy Family parish,' his 'dear people,' he did not enter by the back door of the church. He entered the church by the large middle door in front and walked reverently up the center aisle and went to the sacristy to vest for Mass. And when Sunday came, he went into the pulpit and told his people the story of his travels—all about his missions, his converts, the great numbers of Communions given:

put them in touch with all his work, and told them again and again how glad he was to be back among his own.

Immediately upon his return he picked up the routine work of the parish as though he had never been away. He was regularly in his confessional, visited the sick and the poor, preached, instructed young and old in the catechism, went through the schools, planned for the improvement of the parish and the completion of any work that remained to be done. He was among his people again, just as in earlier days when they were building up the parish together.

During one of these periods at home, Damen undertook the construction of the great church tower. It was fourteen years since the main structure was finished with the tower left truncated. By 1874, Damen saw his way to completing the church by finishing the tower. Among those who put in bids for the tower was Mr. John Garvey, a very close friend of Father Damen, a contractor who had already done much excellent work for him on other parish buildings. Damen refused to consider Mr. Garvey's bid.

'Why do you throw out this bid?' protested Mr. Garvey. 'Hasn't all the rest of my work been satisfactory?'

'Yes,' said Damen, 'it has.'

'Then why not give me a chance at this?' said Mr. Garvey.

'Well, John,' said Damen, 'I'll tell you. Your bid is a good one, as good as any. But you have never built a church tower before.'

'If that's the kind of answer I'll get from everyone else who wants any big work done, I'll never get a chance,' said Mr. Garvey. 'I can build the tower. Why not let this be my first one?'

Damen was inexorable and someone else got the contract. Mr. Garvey was so disgusted at what he con-

sidered this cavalier disposal of his bid that, as soon as he could, he moved out of the parish. He had for some time before been thinking of a more commodious home for his growing family, and he went over to the Sacred Heart parish adjoining the Holy Family parish and also under the Jesuit Fathers. There he selected ground near the church and built himself a house that was exactly what he desired. He had been living in it but a short time when Father Damen was transferred from the Holy Family parish to be the superior of the Sacred Heart parish. Within a week, Father Damen visited Mr. Garvey's home and just as though there had never been any misunderstanding at all, greeted him cordially, praised his house and looked it over carefully. Then he said,

'John, I think we are going to need this house for the parish.'

'Need the house for the parish!' echoed Mr. Garvey, scarcely believing his senses. 'What's the meaning of that?'

'Why,' said Father Damen, 'the school is growing so fast that we must get a much greater number of Sisters to teach than we had expected. We have to get a home right away for these Sisters and this is the only possible house in the neighborhood that will suit, close to the school and all.'

The upshot of the conversation was that Mr. Garvey agreed to leave his house and give it over to the Sisters. The spell of Damen was as potent as ever. Mr. Garvey discovered that his friendship for his old pastor was unchanged. He moved his family into quarters even more cramped than those he had in the first place, the Sisters took his new home, the parish was lifted out of a difficulty and Mr. Garvey was at large looking for another location. This story, which was told us by Mr. Garvey's son, Father Arnold Garvey, S. J., illustrates as well as anything could, the confidence Damen had

in his friends, and the certain response he got from them, even when his demands verged on the chimerical. But they knew Damen would do the same for them if they needed it. They had seen him do it often.

Another incident in connection with the building of the tower did not turn out so fortunately for Father Damen. When the digging for the foundation was under way, some practical joker emptied a few gallons of oil into the water that had seeped through below. Father Damen thought they had discovered an oil well. Great stir and excitement! Here was the solution of all his worries over paying for church, schools, college. For some days, rosy dreams and a Midas-like feeling of touching oil into gold. A big oil derrick alongside the church might not possess the architectural dignity of a Gothic tower, but it was ever so much more useful. Ultimately it would build the tower. Closer investigation soon revealed the sad reality and Damen relinquished his vision of being the pioneer discoverer of Chicago oil. He then enjoyed the joke as others had enjoyed his enthusiasm.

Another relaxation from Damen's mission work was giving retreats. An eight-day retreat calls for at least thirty-two talks. It is nothing simple to give thirty-two consecutive talks to the same audience—intelligent persons, expert in making retreats—and not bore them. Spiritual yawns, I suspect, are often more frequent among the exercitants than the retreat master supposes. The retreat ground is already so trodden that it takes original, personal effort to coax a fresh blade of grass above the surface. A retreat can easily be a thin trickle of spirituality through a desert of platitude.

From many sources we have evidence that Damen was impressive in retreats as in missions. From the beginning to the end of the theme they went to his talks gladly, and left reluctantly. Father O'Meara, who

made a retreat under Damen sixty-three years ago, recalls it vividly still. He writes:

In the old days after the Civil War, when the Missouri Province was yet young and possessed only two colleges, the scholastics from Cincinnati along with those of St. Louis University passed the summer vacations at the summer villa. At the end of the vacation in 1866, Father Damen came to St. Louis to give our retreat. He was then in the prime of manhood, about fifty years of age.

I remember that retreat from the impression it produced on me, and from notes I jotted down at the time. What struck me most was his relation of the death of a fellow novice, as he had witnessed it. There was a young man, he told us, in whom there appeared nothing extraordinary during the first months of the novitiate. Then he read the life of St. Aloysius. After that he began to be a model of fervor and recollection and of union with God in prayer. Three months later he fell sick. Well, I was sitting up with him one night and suddenly I heard him cry out: 'Carissime, O carissime Damen!' and I moved up close to the bed.

'Carissime, do you see that? See the Blessed Virgin coming to take my soul!'

I was alarmed and called in the Community. And exclaiming, 'The Blessed Virgin is come!' the happy novice was rising to meet her. And his soul went into bliss with her as his body fell back on the bed—dead.

'Thus,' he remarked, 'the good Religious has the unction of grace to sweeten his last agony and our heavenly Mother will not forget us at the hour of death.'

This is given in his own words, as only Damen could give it. It is no wonder that this experience supported the piety and faith of his inner life, urging him to zeal for souls.

In fact, zeal for souls was the refrain of that retreat. In his conferences and meditations bearing on that virtue he was at his best in eloquent and flowing thought. 'How noble is the end of the Society of Jesus for the salvation and perfection of souls! It is taken from the life of Jesus.

It was the end of the Apostles; it was the ambition of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier.

'And obedience, along with the means offered by our Society, makes it easy to save others. And the souls we help into heaven will forever surround us with their love and gratitude. Oh, what a happy victory and that everlasting.'

Then, after enumerating the virtues and qualities of a good missionary, he asks: 'Who have done much for the greater glory of God? Is it the worldly minded? Is it the eloquent? The learned? Or is it the ordinary going priest? No, it is the man of prayer and self-sacrifice. It is the ambassador of God, as we see him in a Peter Claver, or a John Francis Regis, in our first ten Fathers and the thousands that followed them.'

That Damen himself was such an ambassador of God his people universally believed, and in all their serious troubles, they came to him. The sick were often brought to him and we have many authentic narratives of cures after his prayer and blessing. It was common belief among the people that Damen worked miracles. Mrs. John Griffin, of Chicago, shortly before her recent death, related the following:

My little girl had a sore on her neck. She cried continuously for three days and nights. She went into spasms. I took her to the doctor, who said it would take at least three months to cure her, and even then there would likely be some after-effects. The little thing seemed to get no relief. Some one said, 'Why not bring the child to Father Damen and have him bless her?' It was no sooner said than done. I carried my little darling to Father Damen. He was saying his Office in the yard or garden, but received me with that patriarchal kindness which always distinguished him, looked at the baby and said, 'Why not take her to the doctor? I have no medicine.' 'Well,' said I, 'Father, bless her anyway.' 'Just a minute, then, I will bless her.' He put on his stole and prayed over her and said, 'Get some St. Ignatius water and apply it,' which I did. The affected part grew as big as a pear in three

days, when it broke. The child had stopped crying immediately after the blessing, the pain left her and she slept for about twenty-four hours, not having slept before for three days. I took her to the same doctor who had said three months' treatment would scarcely cure her. He was surprised at what he saw.

Years after, this same little girl, at the close of a retreat Father Damen had given, made her profession before him as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Dubuque, taking the name of Sister M. Sylvester.

Mr. Charles Branick, an altar boy of the early days, recalls another incident of an apparent answer to Damen's prayer:

One evening of the year 1862, toward the close of the service in the church, rain began to fall in torrents, so that no one dared to leave the church. Father Damen prayed for the rain to cease until the people got home. The rain stopped until I got to my home, which was about a mile away. I served at the altar that night.

Father Hillman used to tell of an experience of his own, which happened while he was assisting Damen on the missions. During one of the very large missions in the East, the church was crowded with people wishing to go to Confession. The necessity for confessors was imperative, or the people would have to be turned away. At the critical hour, Father Hillman was confined to his bed with an excruciating headache. Father Damen came to him and told him of the need in the church. Father Hillman replied that it was impossible for him to move.

'Would you be willing,' asked Father Damen, 'to say an Our Father every day of your life if God removed the headache and made it possible for you to go out and help in the confessions?'

Father Hillman said that indeed he would. Father

Damen told him to rise and kneel down. He said a prayer over Father Hillman and blessed him. The headache disappeared at once and Father Hillman went to work feeling like a new man.

Father Thomas Wallace, S. J., gives another instance of a remarkable cure:

When we were youngsters, Joe Rafferty—afterward the well-known Judge Rafferty, who lived in the Jesuit parish on the north side—lived in the same street with me. He contracted a disease of the hip. The doctors could not help him. Apparently he was to be a cripple for life. I remember the case, and how Joe went about with a crutch for several months. Then his folks had recourse to Father Damen. He said a prayer over Joe, and the next day a bit of bone made its way to the surface and was extracted, and Joe was soon running about like the rest of us. All his family were sure that it was a miracle. Many such incidents were told of Father Damen.

Mrs. Austin O'Malley, of Chicago, tells us of a cure that Father Damen brought to her when she was Alice Comerford, a little girl of eight. Her narrative is given *verbatim:*

My parents' home was on Winchester Ave., near Jackson Boulevard, Chicago. Up to my eighth year, I was as healthy and as happy as any other girl of my age. One night I retired without pain or ache. On the following morning I awoke and found my face turned around facing my right shoulder, the bone of my chin resting rigidly on my right shoulder. My parents brought me the best doctors and surgeons in the city, but to no avail. I continued in this state for several months.

One day as my mother was taking me to the doctor, we met an old Irish woman on State Street. Looking at me with much pity, she inquired how it happened. My mother told her the story. The good old lady thought for a moment and said,

'There is only one man who can help your child, and if he cannot, then God alone can do so.'

The old lady said the man was Father Damen, who lived at the corner of Twelfth and May Streets. We did not see the doctor, but took the bus to Twelfth and May Streets. There were no street cars in Chicago at that time. We arrived just at noon when the bell rang at the pastoral residence. We asked for Father Damen, who came at once to see us. We told him our errand, how the disfigurement occurred, and how we had tried every possible medical aid and that it all availed nothing. We also told him what the old lady had said, that he could cure me and if not, God alone could.

Father Damen told us to go into the church and that he would meet us there soon. We went into the church and awaited his coming, mother, grandmother and I, kneeling near the railing. Father Damen was soon in the sanctuary and, opening the middle gate of the Communion railing, invited us to the main altar. We knelt there on the main step, I in the middle. Father Damen, wearing a stole, took a relic and rubbed it over my neck and shoulder, praying at the same time. He also used St. Ignatius water. He told us to make a novena to St. Ignatius. 'She,' meaning me, 'is old enough to answer the prayers,' he said. Father Damen began the novena there and then by saying three Our Fathers and Hail Marys. We then retired, my grandmother taking me to her home in Peck Court on the South Side in order that I should make the novena without fail.

On the fourth or fifth night of the novena I went to bed as usual with my neck as stiff and rigid as a stick of wood, my face looking over my right shoulder. On the next morning I woke to find myself perfectly cured and as if nothing had ever happened.

I leaped out and screamed with joy, exclaiming 'I am cured! I am cured!' I have been the mother of nine sons and five daughters. At this writing seven sons and one daughter are living. Three sons are Vincentians and one daughter a Sister of Charity, B.V.M. Of the other four sons, two are doctors, one a lawyer and another a writer.

It is easy to see why Damen was not forgotten by his parish in his absence. In fact, while he was away,

they were lonesome for him, and the feeling among them was one of waiting for him to come back. Damen had the sufficiently rare quality of being a good traveler and a good home stayer. He was not restless in either atmosphere. He was spiritually amphibious, so to speak. While on his journeys from place to place he was at ease among all sorts and conditions of men. On returning home, he was thoroughly domesticated at once. He never lost his simple tastes, clung to old familiar ways of doing things. Changes of style did not make much impression on his personal habits. Yet he was not a mere *laudator temporis acti.* He believed in keeping up to the times in all important matters and he was not censorious of people who had other tastes than his own.

As Chicago emerged from its early diluvian condition, it became quickly conscious of its social possibilities. It began to evolve an *élite;* it set improved standards of etiquette, became sensitive to precocious city ways. Then there were things that 'simply were not done.' They were taboo to the initiated. One no longer kept cows, for example, nor had turkeys or chickens rambling unintelligently and cacophonously over the premises. But Damen refused to surrender this reminiscence of country life. He was very fond of fowl and for a long time both turkeys and chickens were cared for in the yard near the church. In bad weather the turkeys were assembled in a rear section of the basement of the church, and old parishioners remember how it happened at times, when the congregation were wrapped in prayer, that the turkeys would open a choral service of their own, to the distinct annoyance of the more staid worshipers and the poorly suppressed merriment of the light-minded.

Two or more cows, also, were appendages of the Damen *ménage.* This attachment to primitive manners was not altogether a matter of sentimentality with

Damen. The fowl provided fresh meat, not so easy to obtain then, and the cows assured him of milk and butter for the household. So that there was a little touch of business mixed up even in this rural romance of Damen's. Gradually, however, genuine culture prevailed and canned foods finally registered the survival of the fittest.

All about the west side Father Damen was very popular with his non-Catholic neighbors. This was not only by reason of his own spirit of cheerful neighborliness, but because, too, they realized that he put money into their purses. The business and employment of the whole west side, they knew, had been largely furthered by Damen and though the district was preponderantly Catholic, there was no discrimination against non-Catholics in any field. They came out to the 'wild prairie' as they called it, were treated generously and made money. Many of them entered the Church, but those who did not, fell into the spirit of the place and were strong friends of Father Damen. Organized bigotry was a thing unthought of among the Catholics.

Recently I visited an old gentleman, nearly ninety years of age, who was mourning the loss of his wife, after more than fifty years of married life. He was in the perfect possession of all his faculties, though deeply depressed by sorrow. In an effort to change his thoughts, I chanced the remark that he must have been an early member of the Holy Family parish, though living far from it now. He brightened up at once. His long-departed youth came back into his face, and the first name he mentioned was the name of Damen.

'Ah, yes,' he said, 'that was sixty-five years ago, and I knew Father Damen well. I was one of his first helpers in the old parish. That was a parish of peace and blessings. The air was blessed there with the prayers of the people. The sidewalks seemed blessed with Father Damen and the priests going about and

giving blessings to the people asking for them. I remember the church building and the schools, and how busy and close together the people were, and all the old friends like a big family. It is like yesterday to me now. Will there ever be a parish like it again in the world?'

These were the people whom Damen could leave and go out on his missions and who would not forget him while he was away. He grew to be a permanent part of their lives.

CHAPTER XXIII

HIS GOLDEN JUBILEE

IN THE fall of 1877, after twenty years of continuous service in the Holy Family parish, Father Damen was appointed Superior of the Missions, with headquarters at St. Ignatius College, Chicago. Thus, while the burden of carrying on the parish was removed from him, he was left among the people he loved and where, as he often said, his heart was. He was now sixty-two years of age, but still in the vigor of his prime. His step was as firm, his energy as enduring, his voice as powerful and melodious as when he first came to the parish, twenty years before. Time had thus far taken no visible toll from the olden Damen. He needed his vigor. The missions had grown to such an extent that it took all his time now to keep them manned and organized. To weld this work into permanent shape and to make it ready as a continuous force for American Catholicity was his work during the two years that followed. After that, while still continuing with the missions, he was named Superior of the Sacred Heart parish, which was originally a part of the mother parish of the Holy Family, and was now at the crest of its development, with almost two thousand families. To Damen this was again like being at home. These were also his own children from the start, and his life here was a duplicate of his days in the original parish, directing the church and school work and traveling out on the missions. Thus he went on for eleven more years, to the time of his golden jubilee.

During the latter part of these years it was that his physical strength was first observed to wane. Nothing more than the steady advance of age, but it was noted with something like surprise, for Damen had seemed to defy age. His voice retained all its golden quality, and altogether in the pulpit he was his old self. He could gather himself together and launch the lightnings of his sermons with all his former grandeur and impressiveness. 'He held his audiences,' Bishop Murphy tells us, 'until the very last.' His confessional remained as crowded, his visible energy during his working hours seemed as full-flowing as ever. But the effort cost him more and the reaction after work became steadily more apparent. Still he was never actually unwell, always cheerful, always looking ahead for more souls to capture.

The golden jubilee of his entrance into the Society of Jesus came on and his friends did not forget it. It has been said, perhaps with a touch of cynicism, that golden jubilees are hosannas over a good stomach. Certainly, merely lasting through a sphere of work for fifty years, however satisfactory to the individual, seems hardly reason enough to call on others to join in jubilee. Too many better men have gone down early in the fight, to allow him to believe that a longer journey is of itself a greater one. This was Damen's view of himself. He would not admit that he had done anything extraordinary. He was thankful that he had been permitted to labor a long time, but he was an unworthy priest, he said, and nothing but the kindness of God had carried him along.

His parishioners and friends thought otherwise. They knew that Father Damen had not drifted up to his golden jubilee, but had fought every step of the way at the top of his endeavor, one charge at the enemy after another, and, more often, several charges going on together. This sort of endurance, they judged,

was something to marvel at. They gathered about him therefore, on the twenty-first of November, 1887, to celebrate his golden jubilee. Three thousand people filled the church, the galleries and sanctuary, with many more outside who could not get in, for the celebration of the Solemn High Mass of thanksgiving in the Holy Family church. Archbishop Feehan was in the sanctuary, and numbers of the Chicago clergy. Father Damen was the celebrant and intoned the Mass with a voice that was still young and resonant. He was assisted by two of his old friends, Father Tschieder as deacon, Father Lalumière, as subdeacon. Two missionaries, Fathers Schulak and Van Hulst, were deacons of honor. Father Thomas Fitzgerald, of Marquette College, Milwaukee, one of Damen's boys whom he directed to the priesthood, preached the sermon. From all over the country, Bishops, priests, and the laity of all classes sent messages of affectionate regard. The General of the Society congratulated Damen and the Holy Father gave him his blessing.

At night, at the dinner, Archbishop Feehan spoke, with much feeling, of his appreciation of Damen, and all he had done for the diocese. It was proposed to found a hospital in honor of Father Damen, and committees were formed and subscriptions started. But Father Damen requested that the money be given to the home and school for the deaf and dumb.

Later, in the church, another great assemblage gathered for the purpose of allowing the laity to express their appreciation. They were represented by the Honorable William J. Onahan, a leading figure in the Catholic life of Chicago. Mr. Onahan knew Father Damen and his work as intimately as any Catholic in Chicago; he had co-operated with him in many of his undertakings, and knew at first hand the inner history of the parish. We give a portion of his address.

Reverend and Venerable Father Damen:

On this, your golden jubilee, the members of the parish of the Holy Family have assembled to testify their love, their gratitude and their veneration for you, their old-time pastor and benefactor.

They have come to congratulate you in their own name, in behalf of all your parishioners present or absent, and in the name of the entire city which has been blessed and benefited by your labors.

They rejoice to see again this well-known figure within this holy sanctuary and to listen once more to the welcome and familiar voice which so often resounded through these aisles.

This is no time for merely personal panegyric. This holy place, your sacred office, a priest of God's Church, forbid that we should employ in this address any language of extravagant eulogy. This address is to a priest.

We seek to pay a just tribute to your priestly character and office, to your pastoral and missionary labors, in the presence of a people to whom all the facts of your life are as the pages of an open book, who would be quick to discern, as they would be sure to condemn, every inaccuracy of statement and any exaggeration of compliment. The bare, unvarnished facts of your life will be your fitting and ample eulogy.

Mr. Onahan then reviews in outline the work of Father Damen as pastor, builder and missionary, and concludes as follows:

You, sir, have builded beyond the grave. Your memory cannot perish; your monument shall endure in the hearts of a grateful people. The charities which you established and nourished will preserve your memory and character in the hearts of the poor and afflicted. And this great college will remain a perpetual memorial of your zeal for learning and for religion.

Not to Chicago will the joy of this golden jubilee be confined. From countless homes all over this land prayers of thanksgiving will ascend to heaven today for all the

multiplied benefits you have conferred on mankind by your labors during the past fifty years.

Nor is the account finally closed. Fifty years of labor and upward of seventy years of time have made their mark, and have laid their heavy impress on your once vigorous frame. Your step is not so alert, your voice is no more ringing and powerful as of old; the penalties of time and toil are visible in your stooped form and venerable gray hairs. But notwithstanding the growing infirmities of age, you are still persevering in the crusade of religion and charity.

In response Father Damen said: 'I am embarrassed to appear before you, because I have received today so many compliments and congratulations which I think I do not deserve. But my heart is full of joy for all the good that has been done here for the past thirty years.' He then recounted some of his experiences and the circumstances of the foundation of the church, 'in a place covered with water lilies and on a street that was more like a canal.' His narration of his early trials was very humorous and excited hearty laughter. He closed by saying, 'Today I lift my heart in gratitude to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon our labors during the last thirty years. I never expected so much gratitude as I have received from you today. And I thank you very much for it.' He then pronounced the Papal Benediction, permission having been especially granted to him for the occasion.

On the next morning the parish of the Sacred Heart took up the celebration with a Solemn High Mass, a large congregation in attendance. In the afternoon Father Damen visited the various schools of the two parishes, received the addresses of the children and gave them his blessing. In the evening the sodalities of the Sacred Heart parish assembled in the church and read addresses to him to which he responded in touching words, ending by imparting the Apostolic Blessing.

A few years ago, the writer was giving a retreat in a convent of Sisters in the far West. On the last day of the retreat the Mother Superior came and said:

'Father, we have an old Sister who has been making the retreat until today, when she has become very weak. The dear creature seems worried about something and I wish you could have a little talk with her.'

I visited the Sister in the infirmary and found her as the Mother Superior had said, almost on the verge of the other world.

'I am so glad you have come, Father,' she said. 'There is something on my mind that is troubling me. I have made the retreat till today, and I have made the resolution to detach myself from everything in this world. I thought I had done this before, but there is one thing that I have not given up yet, and I wish to do it now. It is the thing that is dearest to me and I am going to give it to you, because a Jesuit Father should have it. Here it is.'

And she carefully placed in my hand a small card, limp and worn. It was the souvenir card of Father Damen's golden jubilee, with his picture on it.

'He was my best friend,' she said. 'It was he who showed me my vocation.'

I hesitated to take the card, urging her to keep it as a consolation and an inspiration to prayer in her sickness.

'No,' she said. 'I shall not be long in this world now, and this is my last sacrifice.'

I thanked her for the card and promised to keep it, adding that soon perhaps she would not need the card, as she would meet her old friend in that new country to which she was going.

'Ah,' the saintly old Sister said, 'if only I could ever reach that country, I should surely meet him. Because he will be there, he will be there.'

CHAPTER XXIV

SPIRITUAL TRAITS

'THE instruments raised up by Almighty God for the accomplishment of His purposes are of two kinds, equally gifted with faith and piety, but from natural temper and talent, education, or other circumstances, differing in the means by which they promote their sacred cause. The first of these are men of acute and ready mind, with accurate knowledge of human nature, and large plans, and persuasive and attractive bearing, genial, sociable, and popular, endued with prudence, patience, instinctive tact and decision in conducting matters, as well as boldness and zeal.'

Cardinal Newman is writing here a historical sketch of Basil and Gregory, contrasting their natural temperaments, and he outlines Basil's in the paragraph above. But it might have been written of Damen as well. It is a most apt description of his natural gifts and temperament. Every phrase of the passage fits him perfectly.

For Damen was undoubtedly a providential instrument in the hands of God for the establishment and the spread of a virile Catholicity in the United States. He appeared at a time when the Catholic religion was in a state of solution in the country, and he was one of the great forces that crystallized it into visible form and potency. East and West, Bishops, priests and the laity alike bore open and unanimous testimony to this. Bishop O'Hara, of Scranton, once called for Father Damen at St. Ignatius College, Chicago. He was informed that Damen was engaged for the moment. 'I'll

wait,' he said. 'I must see Father Damen. He made my diocese for me.' Bishop Foley, of Chicago, said that no one had done the work for Chicago and the West that Damen had done. Among the priests, Damen made a friend of every one he met, not only by reason of his engaging character, but by the indelible stamp of religion and piety he left after his missions. He changed their parishes often from a scrambled, incoherent jumble of aimless, go-as-you-please wanderers into united, well-ordered congregations of steadily devout Catholics. 'Through the letters I receive,' he wrote to the General, 'I learn that almost all, both Catholics and converts, give good example to all about them and are a consolation to their parish priests.' The undisguised reverence, gratitude and affection of the laity for Damen surrounded him all his life, and still is deep in the hearts of the survivors.

His Superiors equally testified to his zealous and valuable work for the Church. Their estimates of Damen's worth and of the spiritual motives that impelled him, are singularly alike. 'I think God is with him and approves his work,' Father Murphy writes to the General.

'He is an excellent religious, as well as a splendid missionary, and he continues to perform marvels on the missions. It is evident that the Lord is with him,' writes Father Coosemans. And Father Keller, after some criticism which he admits is tentative and uncertain, says that in spite of his own view, he must confess that Damen is 'dear to God and is led by the spirit of God.'

Though Damen did vitally important service in the East, all through its larger cities, it was in the Middle West that he was most needed, and here, we think it may be fairly said, he did the work of an apostle in laying the foundations of Catholicity. The whole west side of Chicago directly or indirectly owes its Catholic

faith to Father Damen. St. Patrick's parish had been founded there before his arrival, but it was only with Damen's appearance on the scene that the real spread and the prosperity of the west side began. The Reverend P. C. Conway, the present pastor of the Church of the Nativity, Chicago, in his sermon preached in the Holy Family Church on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the parish in 1907, after mentioning Damen as 'the founder and father of this parish and the great west side,' goes on to sum up the growth of the great Catholic west side out of the roots of Damen's original parish: 'There is no need to lift up columns or shafts to immortalize the Jesuits of Chicago. Lift up your eyes and see. Let their works praise them in the gates. Let the parishes of St. Pius, St. Charles, St. Paul, Blessed Sacrament, St. Malachy, Our Lady of Sorrows, Presentation, St. Agatha, St. Finnbar, St. Agnes and a score of others, profess their filial gratitude; let the thousands and the tens of thousands of the faithful all over the city, who received from you the life of grace and the habit of piety, praise your goodness.'

Father Conway does not overstate the case for Chicago. And if we trace to its sources the immense harvest of Catholicity grown throughout the Middle West in the past fifty years, we shall likewise find a large part of it the growth of the seed planted by Damen in his missions. For many years after Damen's death, his name was a household word in hundreds of towns and parishes in this wide territory.

Newman, in one of his letters, remarks, 'A man may have many good points, but yet have no interior.' What he implies, of course, is that a man may do many striking, even useful things and yet personally merit very little honor or credit for them. He does them out of vanity, or self-interest, or again simply for the natural impulse he has for keeping himself interested and busy. It is a game he is playing, as a child amuses

itself among its toys. Such a man does good by accident. His real intention is to keep himself in the public eye, or to avoid boredom. St. Paul is aware of this danger of spiritual canker, when he tells how he has to watch himself, lest after preaching to others, he himself might become a castaway.

Father Damen, too, was alive to this possibility of allowing external activities to choke the fountain of his inner life. He kept his own soul under steady observation, lest he might be making motions without any spiritual meaning to them. If he preached the Gospel to others, we have every evidence that he took good care to preach it to himself first.

The mainspring of his life was prayer. Father William Wallace remembers him as 'always saying his beads. He seemed to have them in his hand all the time, whenever it was possible. I recall, too, his custom of kneeling before the altar during novenas and missions in the church, and praying aloud, with outstretched arms. And I used to wonder, as a youngster, how he could keep them out so long.'

Whether at home or out on the missions, Damen invariably rose in the morning at four o'clock. This meant that when Confessions kept him up until midnight, as frequently happened, he had but three or four hours of sleep. Upon rising, he made an hour's meditation and then said his Mass. He heard one, and often two, Masses of thanksgiving and then went to the confessional, or to the pulpit to preach the morning sermon, at about half past eight. And the rest of the day, devoted to the people, was likewise filled with prayer.

His two principal intentions in his prayers, as we find them in his written notes, were never forgotten. *Ut felicem mortem in Societate obtineam, et ne unquam voluntarie Deum offendam.* (That I may die a happy death in the Society and that I may never willingly

offend God.) As we may infer from the constant use of his rosary, he had a childlike and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. When starting out from home, he recited her Litany. And on seating himself in the train, he used to take out his big beads and begin to say the Rosary. The non-Catholic passengers looked at him with curiosity. 'What is the old man going to do now?' a passenger was overheard asking. 'Is he counting his money?' At the end of a set of resolutions he wrote during one of his retreats, we have a touching little prayer of his, that reveals his intimate affection for the Mother of God. *O Maria, dulcis Mater Mea, O amor meus, obtine mihi, obsecro per viscera misericordiae tuae, per sanguinem Filii tui, obtineas mihi perseverantiam in his resolutionibus meis.* (O Mary, my sweet Mother, O my love, obtain for me, I beseech you through your Mother's mercy, through the blood of your Son, please obtain for me perseverance in these resolutions of mine.)

Devotion to the saints of the Society of Jesus came next to his love for the Blessed Virgin. Shortly after his ordination he took up the practice of reading the lives of Jesuit saints during the week preceding their respective feasts, and whenever he could he made each the subject of his sermon on the Sunday following. St. Francis Regis, whose work as missionary was carried on along parallel lines to Damen's, was his particular patron and he followed closely the spirit of Regis in all practicable details.

We may remark here that Father Damen took very little time for any except spiritual reading. He read Catholic papers and magazines, and did much on his missions to promote their reading by the people. But he passed by the daily papers altogether. He was too close to human life to bother about the papers. He could not see why he should waste his time reading at

second hand what he was constantly meeting and striving to remedy at first hand.

Despite his long hours of daily labor and the energy he spent in them, Damen was most abstemious in the matter of food. It is astonishing, in fact, to see how he could go ahead under the régime he set himself. When a young priest, he bound himself by vow to fast on the vigils of the festivals of the Immaculate Conception, the Sacred Heart, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis Regis; these, in addition to a Lenten and an Advent fast. He abstained entirely from the more delicate dishes, taking only the simplest sustaining fare. As years went on, he undertook a daily fast, excepting Sundays and feast days, and he never relaxed from this during fifteen years of the most fatiguing labors of the missions. Finally, at the age of seventy, he moderated these fasts at the suggestion of the Father Provincial, but he kept scrupulously to his other penances.

Although during most of his active life Damen was in a position of directing others, he proved himself easily flexible to commands when conditions were reversed. Wherever there was any question of stepping out of the common routine of action, even in very small things, he never did so without permission. He had the common sense idea, which is also the religious idea, of letting his superiors know where he was and what he was doing, and he adhered to this idea consistently.

He handled a large amount of money in his life, but it was never contagious. His unusual ability was employed solely in placing what he got so as to do the greatest amount of spiritual good to others. There was no luxury in his manner of life. He lived in a bare room, simply furnished with what was just necessary. This was at home. Out on the missions, though he never mentioned the subject one way or another, he

took the fortunes of war. His life there was, at best, a series of perchings and flittings from point to point, very frequently in those days offering plenty of the hardships of the most primitive life.

No matter how things broke, Damen's habitual temper in all weather was a mixture of vigor and cheerfulness. He brushed through difficulties as through cobwebs, hardly noticing obstacles that to others seemed a blockade. His basic formula for all problems was prayer and hard work. 'When you went out on the missions with Father Damen,' said Father Hillman, 'you knew you were working. But he never asked for anything to be done that he did not do himself, and more of it than anyone else. You didn't need an alarm clock on those missions. Damen was the alarm clock. At four-thirty sharp every morning, . . . knock, knock, at your door and a call *Benedicamus Domino* that would shake the sleep out of your system in a jiffy. You could follow him by the sound, going from door to door, and you were at once on the go, maybe till midnight, in another day's work of chasing the devil. You were so busy that you didn't have time to get tired, with Damen a step ahead of you all the way. Sometimes you'd get peevish over the constant going, when your nerves weren't just right. But when you thought over it, you saw you couldn't logically complain when you looked at the way Damen was going. He was the electricity that kept you on the move and, when it was over, you felt that a big work had been done, and you were proud to have been in it.'

In the brief official record of those days in the Holy Family residence, which is supposed to be only a succession of statements of bald facts, jottings to note the track of past events, the historian could not keep from breaking out into comments on the quality of Damen's work: *Ita arduus labor et strenui conatus Patris Superioris; zelus Patris Superioris non potuit quin;*

nulla difficultate, quamvis magna, victus; multo flagrans ardore; nulla unquam devictus difficultate, (The hard work and the vigorous efforts of Father Superior; zeal that would not be denied; intense and burning energy; driving through every difficulty) are some of the changes rung on the phrases indicating the indomitable spirit of Father Damen.

His severity upon himself extended even beyond the ordinary day's work. In the early 'nineties, shortly after Damen's death, one of the Jesuit scholastics, acting as prefect at St. Mary's College, Kansas, was talking with a group of boys on the playground. The conversation ran upon missions, and the boys began to talk of the Jesuit missionaries they had known. One of the boys said:

'I knew Father Damen.'

'Where did you meet him?' asked the prefect.

'He gave a mission in our parish. He was a saint,' said the boy.

'Why do you say that?'

'Well, I was an altar boy during that mission,' said the boy, 'and I had to go to Father Damen's room to tell him when it was time for him to come out for the sermon. And every day I had to wait outside his door for a little while before I knocked, because I could hear Father Damen in there scourging himself. When I heard it the first time I was scared, but then I remembered that's what I read the saints used to do, and Father Damen was doing that because he was a saint, too.'

Instances of what appear to have been supernatural aids given him in making conversions are related by Damen himself. He told them as strange occurrences that he could not explain.

'I was giving Holy Communion,' he said, 'to a large congregation of people on a mission. When the Sacred Host was placed on the tongue of one woman, it be-

came as if paralyzed. I removed the Host and the seeming paralysis disappeared. I made another attempt to give her the Sacrament. The same thing happened again. I kept this person in view and sent for her to come to the sacristy after Mass. 'Why,' I questioned, 'did you not receive the Sacred Host?'

'I could not move my tongue,' was the answer.

'Have you been to Confession?' I asked.

'No, not for many years,' was the reply.

A similar happening occurred on another occasion while he was giving Holy Communion. Passing along the railing, he noticed a place left unoccupied. This happened a second and a third time. After the Mass, a woman came to the sacristy and demanded, 'Why did you not give me Holy Communion?'

'How long is it since your last Confession?' asked Father Damen.

'Eighteen years,' was the reply.

One of the criticisms made of Damen as Superior was that he was too severe. 'It is said,' writes the General to Father Coosemans, 'that Father Damen has not sufficient regard for the feelings of those under him.' Father Coosemans, replying to this, says that the Community directed by Damen is 'orderly and religious. He himself is a good religious. This I know from certain knowledge.' A little later, in 1862, Coosemans writes: 'Father Damen has improved, I think, in the government of the residence. There are still some complaints, however, which I have frankly laid before him, and he has received them like a good Jesuit.'

The foundation for these complaints was very likely Damen's occasional bluntness of speech and brusqueness of manner that we have noticed before. Moreover, his extraordinary energy of temperament, with his great physical strength, could also make him forget at times the physical limits of others, and perhaps expect

too much of them, not remembering that others were less enduring than he. But there does not seem to be the least reason to believe that Damen was in any sense tyrannical. The evidence we have in his own official reports of his house is all to the contrary. For example, he was warmly appreciative of the co-operation he received.

'Our Community is doing very well,' he writes. 'All are very exact in the observance of the rules and of the Constitutions. They work with great zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.'

Again, in 1866, he writes: 'With regard to our Chicago residence, it has grown very much in things temporal; in matters spiritual, if not equally so, nevertheless, with the help of Divine Providence, it makes rapid progress. We should be able to make better headway, and thus far we confess our spiritual advance is light. Yet we strive constantly to observe the rules, and I am sure the spiritual exercises are faithfully performed by all the members of the Community. I confess that silence is not as strictly observed as our Constitutions impose, and as I desire and very often command. There is no reason to complain of the disobedience of anyone, for all freely and willingly allow themselves to be led by holy obedience. If any defect occurs at times on this point, it is very rarely. For the rest, considering the weakness of human nature and the inconstancy of the human heart, we owe great thanks to God for His goodness and His mercy toward us.'

In all his reports we find not a single official complaint against the personal conduct of any of his Community. The tone of his letters is neither crabbed nor important. If he mentions defects, he rather leans to minimizing than to exaggerating them. The general idea he gives is that all are doing their best. On the other hand, he praises justly and cordially: 'Our

schools are the admiration of the whole city. They are under the care of Father Andrew O'Neil and his brother, Brother Thomas O'Neil, who possess great talent for this important work.'

He writes also in defense of Father Smarius; 'I am not unaware that your Paternity has heard some complaints lately concerning good Father Smarius. But believe me, Reverend Father, his defects were a little exaggerated. He is a man of good will, has the simplicity of a dove, though perhaps not always the prudence of the serpent. He has a tender and sympathetic heart and his actions are well intentioned, though by reason of an occasional lack of prudence, they are badly interpreted. He is a man of great power of action and so obedient that he will correct whatever failings are found in him.'

And when writing of his parishioners, as we have seen, he cannot find words to express his high estimate of their character and their achievements.

It seems certain, as far as we can judge, that Father Damen's general character cannot be estimated as severe. The opposite impression, as a matter of fact, prevailed with all who knew him even casually—the impression of a character of peculiar charm. I recall, when a boy, being one of a committee assigned to wait upon Father Damen on the occasion of his golden jubilee. We were to offer him the congratulations of the St. Ignatius College students, and most important of all in the boys' minds, we were to get a holiday. We were told that the best time to meet him would be after dinner in the recreation room of the Fathers. We went as instructed, and we found the Fathers seated in a semicircle, with Father Damen occupying the place of honor near Father Higgins, who was then President of the school. It was rather a formidable group to us boys, and we may have shown some preliminary signs of being stalled at the prospect. At any rate I remem-

ber Father Damen nodding and smiling at us as soon as we entered the room, and looking around at the other Fathers in a boyish manner, as if to say, 'Aren't they a fine bunch of fellows! Be good to them.' He put us at ease. We made our little address to him as scheduled, and when it came to the holiday part of it, we turned to the President, as the legal holiday giver. But Father Higgins gracefully waved his hand toward Father Damen, and said, 'Tomorrow the college is Father Damen's. He may do as he wishes with it.' Father Damen became radiant with a boyish joy. He bowed to Father Higgins, and said to us, 'Father Rector gives me the school tomorrow, and'—pushing his two hands out to us exactly like a boy sharing something with other boys—'now I give it to you. I don't know what you will do with it.' We assured him that we could not think of anything else to do with the school in this case than to use it for a holiday. 'Ah,' said he, laughingly, 'I wish you many happy days, if not all holidays.' And he gave us a blessing. It is not easy to forget the meeting. He was patriarchal and youthful together and the whole room seemed alight and vibrant with his childlike good feeling. Charm is the only word that can express it.

A note sent from Vancouver, B. C., written by Mother Sheridan shortly before her death, contains the following:

'Father Damen was very true to his friends. He had a little case, containing some precious relics, and he promised Mother Neiderkorn that if he received permission he would leave it to her after his death. Now she did not see him for a number of years before his call to heaven and naturally thought the matter was completely lost sight of. What was her surprise, shortly after his death, to receive the valued reliquary, sent her by Father Fitzgerald in compliance with the request of Father Damen!'

On four different occasions Damen's name was prominently mentioned for a bishopric, once for St. Louis, once for Detroit, and twice for Chicago. The second time Damen's name came up for the Chicago diocese, he settled the possibility in a rather dramatic, but decisive, manner. We quote the story exactly as we received it:

You remember that most lovable Father Carroll, who paid us a visit when we were studying philosophy—the Jesuit from the Eastern Province, crippled by rheumatism —was wheeled about in his chair. He made his way over to our recreation room. Fine sense of humor, delightful *raconteur,* loved by all in his own Province.

On that occasion of his visit to us, he told of how, as a scholastic, a little fellow, he passed through Chicago and paid a visit to St. Ignatius College. Father Damen was Superior. It was the feast of St. Ignatius. In those days a large number of the diocesan clergy used to meet at dinner on St. Ignatius day. It was a great feast day. Bishop Duggan had become completely incapacitated. New Bishop talked of. Many of the clergy wished Father Damen as next Bishop. Well, Father Carroll told how Damen welcomed him—took him up in his arms, brought him down to the refectory and gave him a seat of honor. It was a feast of the good old style, a homecoming. Then speeches. One of the clergy mentioned Father Damen for next Bishop. Great applause. At the end came Father Damen's speech. He thanked all for their charity and kindly feeling, but said it would be a big mistake on their part to vote for him as Bishop. Because, he said, he was sure that if he were made Bishop, one of his first acts would be to suspend several who were present there in the refectory. Quite an impressive remark.

CHAPTER XXV

LAST DAYS

AFTER the celebration of his golden jubilee, Father Damen continued to lead his band of missionaries for another year. But he was visibly losing strength. Thirty years of forced marches all over the country, with their rapid changes of climate and their eighteen-hour working-day throughout, finally wore their way inside the hitherto impregnable physical defense. At the end of the mission year, in the summer of 1888, he was sent to Creighton College, Omaha, in the hope that the change of climate would be of benefit.

In the fall of the year he came to Florissant to make his annual retreat. It was the last retreat he made. An incident of that retreat remains still clear in my memory. I was a novice then and, according to routine, the novices had a free day each week when they could play games, go for walks through the countryside and in general take the open air. One of these free days occurred during Father Damen's retreat, a still autumn day, the air clear and clean, the leaves partly fallen and golden underfoot, the woods a riot of glorious color. Just the day for a good walk. Before starting, the custom was to make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the Community chapel. As I stepped inside the chapel, I saw Father Damen near the altar in a shadowy corner, absorbed in prayer. We went off on our walk and after two hours returned. Entering the chapel for another visit, I saw Damen in the same place, his eyes fixed on the tabernacle, oblivious of everything else about him. The brilliant beauty of

that day could not tempt him from the spot. And I found out that, outside of the formal meditations which he made in his room, he spent nearly all the day thus praying in the chapel. He seemed to me then to be very near the gate of heaven.

But he could not give up the missions. His idea of strength was that it was something to expend, not to conserve, and while he had any of it left at all, he kept to his former system of expending it. Although he was relieved of the responsibility of directing the missions, he obtained the consent of his Provincial to go out into Nebraska and the neighboring states and give missions by himself. He was back where he had begun—alone on the missions again, but now shorn of his vigor and all but dragging himself from one small town to another across the prairies of the then far West. It is evident that he retained, at least, all his irrepressible daring. He could no longer stand in the pulpit and had to remain seated during his sermons. But once started, they tell us, the ancient mission fires blazed up again, and for the time, he held his audiences under the old spell of his best days.

But the thought of the danger that constantly beset him, thus isolated and most probably without any possibility of help in the event of a sudden emergency, worried the Provincial. In the spring of 1889, while Father Damen was working in the diocese of his friend, Bishop Burke of Cheyenne, Wyoming, the Provincial wrote to him and told him that he was very anxious about him, alone and in feeble health and far away from any Jesuit house. The Provincial had good reason to be anxious. I remember Bishop Burke, on a visit to Florissant, describing his young diocese at that time as a vast area of windswept sandy desert flanked by barren hills, where wholesome food was a rarity and where they sold water by the pail.

Damen did not appear to notice these evident draw-

backs, however. He replied to the Provincial very humbly, expressing his entire readiness to start at once for Omaha or St. Louis if the Provincial said the word, but begging at the same time to be left at the work so near his heart. The Provincial was touched at this request, felt that Damen would be happier as he was, and allowed him to go on.

But it was not to be for long. Father Damen was giving a mission in Evanston, Wyoming, and was in the act of giving Holy Communion at its closing Mass, on June 4, 1889, when a stroke of paralysis took him at the altar rail. With the kind assistance of the pastor, Reverend C. Fitzgerald, he managed to reach Cheyenne two days later. There he was met by the President of Creighton College, Father Thomas Fitzgerald, and Mr. John A. Creighton, who brought him with every attention to Omaha.

For several days after he reached home he tried to believe that he was his old self. He was cheerful and firmly believed that he would recover and go back to his work once more. But he had preached his last sermon. Assisted by one of the Fathers, he said Mass up to June thirteenth, and on that day he said his last Mass likewise. He still hoped for recovery, though he now recognized his case as serious and he asked for Extreme Unction. He was anointed on the twelfth of June. He began steadily to decline and the remaining months were given to his preparation for death. He heard Mass every day and received Holy Communion, enduring extreme thirst each night, without a murmur, until the five o'clock Mass. And all the day he kept praying.

Father Fitzgerald, his Superior, wrote of his last days:

He was a source of great edification to all, during his long illness. He frequently expressed a desire to get well and work more; but it was in no spirit of complaint or

repining over his condition. He suffered very resignedly and patiently, and the amount of suffering he was called upon to endure was at times truly appalling and fearful. I admired Father Damen very much in his missionary life for his many grand traits, but I admired him much more in his sickness, or, rather, our admiration passed into reverence, seeing in him, as we did, the embodiment of the highest religious virtues in the midst of the severest trials. Naturally he feared and dreaded suffering, and before it came he spoke of it with much alarm, humbly protesting his powerlessness to withstand it. But when it did come, all his fears proved groundless, for he bore his trials with the patience of a saint and the endurance of a martyr.

Father Thomas Wallace, who was with Father Damen in Omaha during four months of his last sickness, writes:

As a novice I spent four months in Omaha. Father Damen was there, his last illness on him. I left Omaha in November. He died on January 1st. But during my stay I was with him a great deal. At his request, for several weeks I read to him every morning for half an hour. Then, as he was confined to his chair, I rolled the wheel chair to the chapel and there, before the altar, read one of the visits of St. Alphonsus Liguori. We returned to his room and I read to him again, from a little magazine—I think it was called the *Holy Child*—all about missions in China, etc. How grateful he was every morning! What a real delight to him to make that visit! It was an event. And when I read to him about the work going on in the missions, how he wept—the big chair shook.

I asked him what he was crying about, said to him that it was the will of God that he shouldn't be doing that work any more, and so on. He said that at least he could sit in his chair there, and pray for them and say his beads there, and console them. He always had his beads with him. Certainly a man of the most vivid faith.

He was always patient and pleasant. One moment he'd be telling how he dreamed that he appeared before Jesus

Christ for judgment, and the next he was telling you some anecdote—something funny—that happened in the old parish on Twelfth Street. The diocesan clergy held their retreat at Creighton and went to Mass in our chapel. Father Damen was always present in his chair near the altar, at that Mass. The priests thought that was the best part of the retreat. They were wonderfully edified by him. He answered the Mass prayers with the acolytes, tears welling up from his simple heart. Once in his room and once in the chapel he had me kneel and he asked God to drive away the headaches. And you may believe me, those were real prayers.

For a month before the end, Father Damen found it impossible to lie down without great pain and danger of suffocation. This forced him to remain in his wheel-chair constantly. On Christmas day, however, his condition seemed to improve; a flash of his youthful vigor returned and he was more like his old self than he had been for some time. He was able to attend the Solemn High Mass in the church, his chair being rolled to a point in the sacristy from which he could see the priests at the altar. Tears of joy ran down his cheeks while he was hearing this Mass. During the whole day he felt so well that at the dinner hour he expressed the wish to join the Community in the refectory and to dine with them. Attended by Brother Delaney, who cared for him throughout his sickness, he sat near the Rector, as happy as a child to be with the Community once more.

It was his last time—the final upleap of the flame before it was extinguished. Immediately after Christmas he began to sink rapidly. Paralysis made rapid headway. His mind wandered from time to time; but he was perfectly conscious on New Year's morning, when he received the Viaticum, shortly after midnight. As day approached, there was a last feeble rally of his strength. He had not heard Mass, he said, and he

wished to be at the solemn services in the church. A final relapse came on quickly after this, and from dawn until ten o'clock he steadily drew on toward the happy death he had prayed for so often. He was conscious to within a few moments of the end and prayed audibly as long as speech remained. His last intelligible words were 'Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my life and my sufferings,' one of his favorite ejaculations.

When the end appeared to be but a matter of minutes, the Community assembled in the room to assist in the prayers for the dying. Father Damen retained consciousness throughout and when the name of Jesus was spoken to him, or a pious ejaculation, he slightly inclined his head, until, a little before ten o'clock, he died.

He was buried at Florissant, near Father De Smet, his friend from boyhood, and near many of his old companions, the founders and builders of the Jesuit province of the West.

The present writer was at his graveside as cross-bearer the day of Damen's burial. In addition to the Jesuit Community, a number of friends from St. Louis and a delegation of men from Chicago were there. As the body was about to be lowered into the grave, one of the men from this delegation, I think it was Mr. John Garvey, stepped forward and reverently kissed the wooden box that enclosed the coffin—the last affectionate salute to Damen from the Holy Family parish.

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